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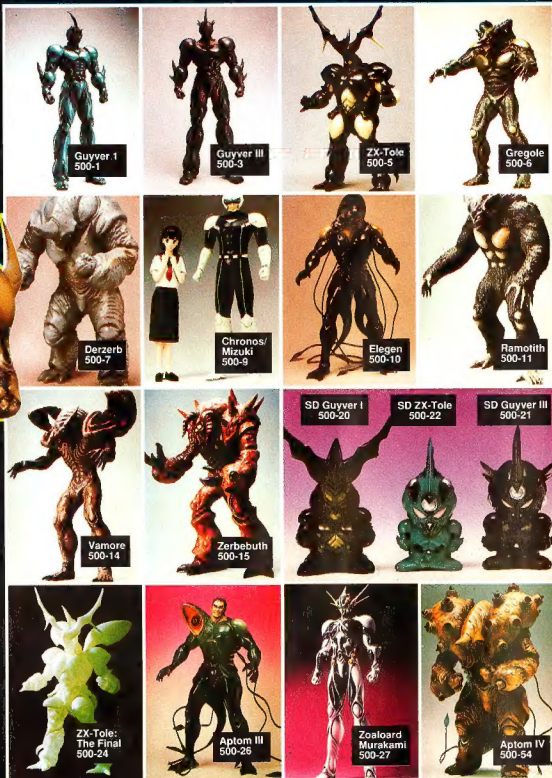
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Heroic Identities

Changing superheroes has always been a way to boost flagging sales and buttress faltering creativity. Heroes have been getting facelifts since time immemorial, cosmetic alterations which often merely offer the illusion of change.

Batman acquires a "New Look" costume (with a stylish yellow circle). Spider-Man quits or grows a couple extra arms or dons a nifty all-black costume (that eventually, of course, gets its own comic). Wonder Woman goes through countless changes, though sadly, it's hard to find readers who care.

Daredevil develops an alternate alter-ego (a hitherto, unknown, sighted brother). Swamp Thing's a man who has become a plant—wait, he's a plant who thinks he was a man (wait a minute, on second thought...). Tony Stark refines and redesigns his armor and doesn't even always wear it himself. Hank Pym and Hawk become bad guys for awhile. And Superman dies. OK, maybe not.

In short, the striking, substantial changes that comics creators can make in a hero basically are: The ubiquitous new costume. New guy (or gal) takes over the heroic mantle (temporarily or permanently, as in the Phantom and Green Hornet family tradition). Old hero gets new secret identity (or heroic name), a nasty new character trait, new powers, a new supporting cast (or maybe all of the above) or occasionally, an all-new setting (Jonah Hex treks to the future). Hero goes bad. And when all else fails, kill somebody (spectacularly).

How does this work? To illustrate, let's employ a popular ninesome (yes, nine) who, for all intents and purposes, could be a superheroic team—Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (specifically Uncle Walt's version).

Hypothetically speaking, sales are down for the Dwarf Legion—so changes must be made. First thing that shakes the title up—Snow White turns to the Dark Side, tossing aside pleasant peasant get-ups for something in leather and studs as well as a new moniker (Snow Dark). Bashful, though not quite tall enough, is, after the operation, the all-new, improved Snow White.

Grumpy gets a new costume, and still isn't happy about it. Happy, meanwhile, is torn apart and eaten alive by hungry yet fastidious wolves. He sings merrily all through the munching. The others grieve and vow eternal vengeance on all wolfdom.

IF THE PRODUCERS OF 'STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION' MADE ACTION MOVIES

THIS SCENE:

YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THOUSANDS OF DEATHS! PREPARE TO DIE HORRIBLY, YOU VILE FIEND!!



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Sleepy moves to Vegas and gets his own book, leading a new band of mutant dwarfs. Now boasting a building-shattering super-sneeze power, Sneezy also reveals a hitherto unknown character trait, moving into the castle with the team's recurring sidekick (and ninth banana), Prince Charming.

As for Dopey, that quite short scientific genius Doc finally perfects his biotechnical improvement technology, transforming Dopey into the most intelligent of dwarfs. Appropriately, Dopey discards his old identity and answers to a new dwarf name—Smartass.

Such a scenario certainly dwarfs the imagination, yet in reality, as you'll see this issue, lotsa heroes are getting (presumably) new leases on life through creative alterations. Writer/artist Tim Truman is revising the recently revived (and just revised) *Turok, Dinosaur Hunter*. War Machine (previously Iron Man now and again) gets his own book and a (mostly) new supporting cast. Writer David Quinn enchants a new Dr. Strange whose identity, costume, powers and personality have all been reshaped.

And in an effort to revitalize *Green Lantern*, the creators have bet the whole kit and kaboodle: new costume and powers, new guy, new cast and setting, old hero gone bad with new name, and for good measure, lotsa death. It's all intriguing and interesting and to old fans, sometimes quite annoying. But after all, these are only comic book heroes—and as always, writer/artist Howard Chaykin has an insightful view of this old business of power & glory and all the characters who deal in it. Look for his candid thoughts on heroism on page 21.

Of course, there's one thing certain and permanent about all the changes being made to our favorite heroes. If the alterations don't gel and the comics don't sell, it'll simply be time to change the heroes again.

—David McDonnell/Editor

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ANIMATION SCENE

Aladdin Achieves an Annie! for Best Animated Film at the 21st Annual Annie Awards, winning over *Little Nemo: Adventures in Slumberland* and *Once Upon a Forest*. An "Annie" is the highest honor in the animation profession, bestowed by the members of ASIFA-Hollywood, the local chapter of the International Animated Film Society. The November 5 event was held at the Academy of Television

Jack Zander, Walt Disney Company vice-chairman Roy Disney and the late George Dunning, Canadian animator and director of *Yellow Submarine*.

You too can nominate and vote for your favorite cartoons in the Annie Awards, plus enjoy screenings, the monthly *Inbetween* newsletter, cel discounts and other ASIFA benefits. For more information, contact Antran Manooagian,



Vocal wonder Dan Castellaneta took home an Annie for mouthing off Homer Simpson.

many illustrations, model sheets, storyboards and photos in one volume. Softbound copies are available for \$16.95 at your local bookstore or, for \$2 extra for postage, from the publisher: Black Bear Press, 2828 Cochran Street, Suite #152, Simi Valley, CA 93065.

X-Men X-Citement: Coming your way from Saban Entertainment is the third season—39 new episodes—which begins with a five-part episode on the Phoenix, already in production, featuring appearances by Lilandra and Gladiator of the Shi'ar. Fox plans to air 65 episodes for its afternoon 'toon block this fall. Pity the poor artists who have to animate all those characters, plus the endless seams, belt buckles and zippers for their elaborate mutant costumes.

Japanese Animation Goes Mainstream: Best Film & Video of Hicksville, New York, a 12-year-old video distributor, is releasing six Streamline Pictures imports for the mass market: *Legend of the Dragon*, *Windaria*, *Zillion: The Beginning* (the first three episodes on one tape), *Zillion Special: Burning Night*, *Robot Carnival* and *Miyazaki's The Castle of Cagliostro*. Each title is priced to sell at \$19.99 Standard Play, or \$14.99 Extended Play.

Also, Family Entertainment has re-acquired the video rights to *Robotech*, releasing two uncut episodes per tape at \$14.95. Stream-

line will continue to produce and sell *Robotech: Perfect Collection* videos containing two *Robotech* episodes and their corresponding Japanese versions, at \$19.95 per tape. Pioneer has begun releasing *Robotech: Macross* episodes on Laserdisc.

A New Story Editor for Spider-Man: John Semper replaces Martin Pasko on *The Spectacular Spider-Man*, the Marvel Films Animation series which may have its Fox premiere delayed to January 1995. Semper's writing credits include *Kissmyfur* and *The Chipmunks*.

The Swan Princess is the new title for Rich Entertainment's *Swan Lake*. That's because the producers don't want it associated with Peter



Earning an Annie for Individual Achievement was Eric Goldberg, who animated The Genie.

Tchaikovsky's classic ballet. Though based on the *Swan Lake* fairy tale, the movie has an original score. The name of the prince is Derek, instead of Siegfried. He's voiced by Howard McGillan. The love of his life, Princess Odette (speaking voice by Michelle Nicastro; singing by Liz Calloway), has been kidnapped by the powerful wizard Rothbart (Jack Palance), whose spell transforms her into a beautiful swan at night. Fortunately, Odette has animal friends who can help her: Jean-Bob (John Cleese with a French accent), a frog who wants her to kiss him so he can turn into a human prince; a turtle

nicknamed "Speed" (Steven Wright); and Puffin (Steve Vinovich), a Scottish-accented militaristic puffin. Sandy Duncan voices Derek's mother Queen Uberta.

The Swan Princess has a budget of \$35 million for marketing and production; it boasts Disney-quality animation and FX. The screenplay was written by Rick Rich and Brian Nissen; the director is Rich, who previously worked at Disney for 14 years, directing *The Fox and the Hound* and *The Black Cauldron* and assistant-directing *Pete's Dragon* and *The Rescuers*. Rich Animation Studios has a staff of 130 working hard to complete the film (approaching the halfway point in December) for a late 1994 release. A 35-second *Swan Princess* trailer began playing in theaters the week of Christmas.

The Mouse Factory Marches On: The Walt Disney Company has announced several exciting projects for its Feature Animation Division, whose staff currently numbers 400.

The studio is actively recruiting more artists for their expanding production slate. Upcoming is *The Lion King*, produced by Don Hahn, directed by Rob Minkoff and Roger Allers, written by Irene Mecchi and Jonathan Roberts. Inspired by Osamu Tezuka's *Jungle Emperor* (aka *Kimba: The White Lion*) with elements from Disney's *Bambi*, *The Lion King* is a coming-of-age tale of a lion cub, Simba (Matthew Broderick, as the adolescent Simba), heir to the throne of the African jun-

gle. But his father (James Earl Jones) is betrayed by his wicked uncle, Scar (Jeremy Irons), and Simba is exiled from the pride. Whoopi Goldberg and Cheech Marin voice a couple of treacherous hyenas. Originally titled *King of the Jungle*, story and production problems delayed the project, forcing Disney to substitute Tim Burton's *The Nightmare Before Christmas* for its holiday 1993 release. Character animation is expected to have finished this past January, with a May premiere slated. A trailer showing with Disney's recent *The Three Musketeers* and *Sister Act 2* previews the spectacular opening number, "The Circle of Life," one of five songs composed by Elton John with lyrics by Tim (Aladdin) Rice.

Goofy fans will be delighted to know that *The Goofy Movie* is coming this Thanksgiving—which gives the Feature Animation crew time to finish *Pocahontas*, postponed due to story problems. Like *DuckTales: The Movie*, *The Goofy Movie* is made by Disney's TV Animation division, with the animation primarily done in France.

Meanwhile, production continues on *Fantasia Continued*, which will replace some material from the original *Fantasia* with new musical pieces: Ludwig van Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*, Dmitri Shostako-



Roy Disney was also honored with a Winsor McCay Award. He's currently developing Fantasia Continued.

vich's *Piano Concerto No. 2*, Sergei Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, Camille Saint-Saëns' *Carnival of the Animals* and Ottorino Respighi's *Pines of Rome*. The sixth and final number,



Look to Animation by Filmation for information on such series as the company's Flash Gordon.

Pomp and Circumstance by Sir Edward Elgar, is said to feature virtually every Walt Disney cartoon character. Each piece will be interpreted differently from the composer's intention. *Fantasia Continued* is produced by Don Ernst, directed by George Scribner (director of *Oliver & Company*), with Hendel Butoy as supervising director. James Levine serves as the new conductor.

After its delays, *Pocahontas* is targeted for spring 1995 release. According to Disney animation exec Peter Schneider, the movie's theme is, "If we don't learn to co-exist with our fellow man, regardless of race, reli-

gion or creed, we will all soon destroy ourselves." *Pocahontas* portrays the settlers of Jamestown as greedy opportunists eager to ravage the pristine New World for gold. John Smith (voiced by Mel Gibson) tells Pocahontas, "By the time we're through, you won't recognize the place." *Pocahontas* is being produced by Jim Pentecost, directed by Mike Gabriel and Eric Goldberg and written by Carl Binder, Phil (Star Trek) Lazebynik & Susannah Grant, with seven songs by composer Alan Menken and lyricist Stephen Schwartz.

The Hunchback of Notre Dame is slated for fall 1995, produced by Roy Conli, directed by *Beauty and the Beast*'s Kirk Wise and Gary Trousdale, written by Irene Mecchi and Tab Murphy, with music by Menken and Schwartz.

The Legend of Fu Mulan

(a.k.a. *China Doll*) is sort of a Chinese Yentl, in which a woman disguises herself as a man, going into battle to uphold the honor of her family, and ultimately save the emperor. The story is produced by Amy Pell, directed by Barry Cook, and written by Linda (Beauty and the Beast) Woolverton, with music by Schwartz. *Fu Mulan* will be storyboarded in Burbank, with the bulk of the animation done at the Walt Disney World studio.

Also in the works: *Tin Boy*, directed by John Lasseter, a computer-animated feature sequel to the Oscar-winning short, *Tin Toy*.

—Bob Miller



Film and animation historian Leonard Maltin presented the Winsor McCay Award (for lifetime achievement in animation) to the legendary Jack Zander.

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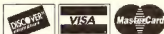
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...Will Murray's article, "Why Your Comics Are Worthless" in CS #37 was right on the money! Recently, we had to move (and downsize because of the property taxes), and I tried to sell a chunk of my comic collection to several comic shops, all of which were part of a chain. They said they had a freeze on all buying of old issues. I guess there really is an overglut of preserved, bagged back issues out there. One shop gave me the phone number of a private collector, but at a nickel a pop, it wasn't even worth the cost of the gas to drive to Timbuktu to give them away. All I can recommend to your readers in a similar situation is to bag 'em all, catalog 'em all and wait for a nearby convention, rent a table and sell 'em at half the Overstreet Price Guide prices. That way you'll unload your stock, make your fellow fans happy, and still have something you can fold left over.

I'm about the biggest Comic-Kazi you're likely to meet, but the national recession and general downsizing in housing does not bode well for any large-scale comics collector, either financially or space-wise. And, regardless of my love of the genre, I am appalled by the ridiculous price mark-ups of the new comics these days. I've seen

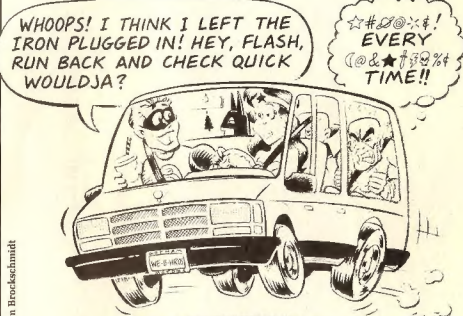
Valiant titles that were on sale in the shops for 50¢ skyrocket to over \$50 a year later. The other companies are close behind. I suppose it's more acceptable than printing money in the basement, but the comic industry has turned into a "Paper Mill," grinding out more "new," "special," "unique" series, all of which you had better buy before they vanish forever.

These are comic books, for Pete's sake! They are not rare, sacred, religious artifacts or a cure for cancer. What started out as a kind of counter-culture media for John Everyman has turned into a rich man's hobby, a hyped-up, fanatic investment portfolio. Will Murray is right: be a fan out of love for the medium, because these days it really is Windhandel, "trading in the wind."

Contrary to what the publishers seem to believe, there is no standard formula for making a hit comic. It's a weird alchemy of creators' talents and public preferences. What they do nowadays is bombard the reading public with countless new characters and team-up plotlines. By a kind of natural selection, the favored comics sell well and become an established series. There's an overglut of new series now, and that can't last long, even with sheer talent

philism. I wonder, if they ever do legalize hard drugs, won't that eliminate about half the comics overnight? They won't have anymore standard plotlines of destroying crookhouses to write about anymore. And, if the question of whether there really are aliens in outer space who visit Earth is ever resolved, it would eliminate the other half of the comic industry's stories. Still, I guess the overglut of

mylar bags minimize this deterioration by keeping air out of the reaction. But the only way you could really preserve them in pristine condition would be to store them in a hermetically-sealed vault, with a Helium atmosphere, at a constant, refrigerated temperature of 38 degrees Fahrenheit. Unless they start using acid-free paper in the new comics, the same thing will happen to them.

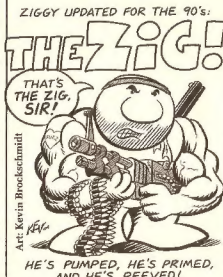


WHY THE FLASH HATES ROAD TRIPS

bagged, preserved back issues will ensure that just about any collector who wants an old issue now will be able to eventually get it.

By the way, if you have comic newsletters, large books or oversized magazines or special editions of comics that don't fit in the standard mylar bags, I recommend you try using the zip-up plastic that new blankets come in. I put some in those about a decade ago, and they seem to work to minimize yellowing pretty well. Likewise, the new Glad Ziplock bags and plastic laundry bags should work equally well. Just keep in mind that if you want to preserve old comics for your great-grandkids, it may not be possible. The paper they are printed on is usually standard newspaper stock, paper bleached white in the first place with Alum or acid. The residue of bleaching agent in the paper makes slow fires in the pages that inevitably yellow and crumble it. Acid-free

In the '90s, I believe that the main comic companies will record all their back issues on microfilm, sheets of microfilm viewed through a projection viewer, so collector can purchase entire series of comics, in the space of a thin paperback, for their reading. They already made microfilm of the first editions of *Batman* and *Superman*, and this economical approach will surely be extended to other series. By the turn of the century, I am certain that all comic back issues will be recorded in CD libraries, which they do already with historical documents. Thus, comics will be accessible to anybody with a PC and a phoneline to subscribe to the comic library. Subscribers will be able to peruse literally any back issue of any comic published. It will be like having an infinite attic to sort through at your fingertips.



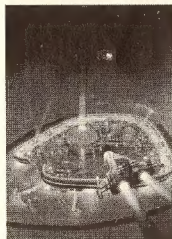
driving half of them. I notice an emphasis on flaming, drunken, steroid-raging biker characters lately that I hope will die out. Comic book heroes are supposed to be role models, not pseudo-villains chronically lambasting social institutions, out of petty

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By HARLEY JEBENS

Dr. Stephen Strange has always been the odd man out in the Marvel Universe. While the other superheroes are kept busy saving the world or even the universe from destruction, Strange has a myriad of dimensions, the multiverse, to watch over. The other superheroes sort of prance around in the daylight, sun gleaming off their bright costumes, cracking jokes at the latest menace to come down the pike, but Dr. Strange dwells in the darkness.

Even in a Marvel Universe that has grown increasingly darker over the past few years, Strange is an uncomfortable presence. His aloof behavior, his manipulative ways, the very world in which he dwells, all serve to set him apart from the crowd, even when the crowd includes super-powered mutants, Norse thunder gods and spider-irradiated guys who are married to super-models. Even compared to folks like that, Dr. Strange is a strange one.

And for Stephen Strange, things have just gotten a great deal stranger.

Maybe it started when he helped assemble the Midnight Sons, the mystic nine (Ghost Rider, Blaze, Morbius, the Night Stalkers and the Darkhold Redeemers) charged with protecting the dimensional walls from being ripped asunder. Things really came to a head, however, in Dr. Strange's recent battle against Lilith and her horde of Lilin, a battle that led him to destroy his own Sanctum Sanctorum (Dr. Strange #60). Salome, one of the Fallen, who was sorceress supreme long before Stephen Strange or his mentor, the Ancient One, laid claim to the title, returned and wrested that title away from Dr. Strange. Then, the moustached sorcerer disappeared, and was replaced by a mysterious, masked figure calling himself "Strange."

Writer David Quinn, known for his work on *Faust* (CS #10), is in charge of chronicling this new direction of Marvel's resident mystic authority's life.

"What we have is Doc's personality crisis, basically," Quinn says. "In order to grow to the next level, he had to let his life go to ashes. I mean—before issues #62 and #63 have come out—none of the questions have been answered. Everything is in chaos. Did we really see Stephen Strange get destroyed? If we did, why is this magical berserker calling himself Strange running around the Marvel Universe magically kicking ass? Michael Morbius starts looking for his friend Stephen Strange, and he's convinced that he finds him. And then when he comes upon Stephen Strange, all of his expectations are changed and turned

Art: Melvin Rubi/Fred Harper



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Art: Melvin Rubi/Fred Harper

Who or what is Strange? Even Dr. Doom is at a loss for an answer.

away. There's no trust, no one can trust Dr. Strange any more. And he couldn't even trust himself in the Siege of Darkness. He sort of gave up everything. And now he can choose his own course. He has broken all the rules and can now make new ones.

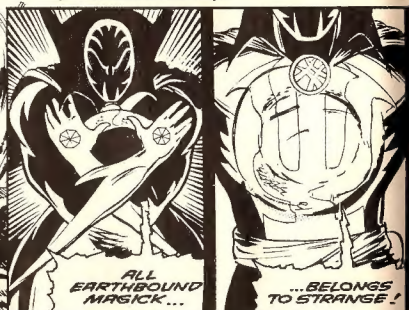
"This is the story I wanted to tell," Quinn says. "Who would Doc be if he got into these dire straits? Who could he become?"

The four-part 'Strangers Among Us' series (beginning in *Dr. Strange* #64) is going to answer the questions that I'm being vague about here," notes Quinn. "I'm not saying it will answer all your questions, you may end up with new ones, but it will answer the first one: What happened to Dr. Strange? And also, what is he doing? Where is the new Sanctum? Why did he build a

new Sanctum? What kind of power is he trying to build? And who are these strangers? Who is Strange, the dark, masked, magical berserker character? And who is the mysterious Dr. Stephen who's running around accumulating great power and wealth in Manhattan's social scene and wreaking havoc there?

"As I write these stories, I often look through the point-of-view of this new

Art: Melvin Rubi/Fred Harper



Strange may believe all Earthbound magic is his, but Salome is "an elemental magician—Doc's weak hand," notes Quinn.

sorceress supreme. Which makes it fun, because I'm writing the book through the so-called bad guy's perspective. She's the major antagonist for Stephen Strange, and I'm going through her eyes. She'll be one step ahead of the reader in answering the questions about what the hell happened to Dr. Strange. That's my plan."

Quinn says of Salome, the new sorceress supreme, "You know already, from looking at her, that she's powered by the elements, the Earthbound elements. She's an elemental magician. Which is precisely Doc's weak hand, the one area he never bothered to learn. And so this is part of Doc's crisis. 'Why,' he's asking himself now, 'did he take it for granted?' He really trained himself and took on so many responsibilities and he left this whole area of elemental magic totally, totally undeveloped.

"Salome is this kick-ass elemental magician. She's the strongest being there is in that realm. And she's also fueled by negative emotion—violence, hatred, racism, despair, selfishness, brutality. So wherever she goes, she puts off these emotional ripples that bring that out in other people. And she's also creating powerful agents to work in the world to fight for this—she

Salome takes on the mantle of Sorceress Supreme. More of a "bad guy," she has a different attitude about her job.



Art: Mark Buckingham

just brings out the worst in people.

"The more bad feeling there is in the world, the more powerful Salome is. She becomes kind of like a Dr. Doom. Other writers of other books, other creators, other editors—they're all welcome to use her. We've told them all about her. She's something new and bad."

But as sorceress supreme, isn't Salome supposedly charged with protecting Earth, with holding up the dimensional walls that separate this dimension from the ones outside, to guard Earth from all the beasts trying to scratch and claw their way in?

"That's her role now," the writer explains. "She has taken it on. Strange quit. She just has a different attitude about ['protecting' the dimensions] than Strange does. As different as the ideas of Bill Clinton and the Ayatollah. They're both in charge, right?"

Quinn says, "We're going to see many new characters, Marvel Universe characters, and we're going to see some pretty drastic changes in the relationship between Doc and some of the people he actually knows well—Morbis, Wong and Clea.

"We'll see Wong in a very familiar role," Quinn says, "which will be very challenging to both Wong and Strange. We may see Wong in a servant role again, choosing that and, perhaps, not even working for Dr. Strange.

"I've been hungry for a reconciliation of sorts between Doc and Clea, but every time I tried to do it, it just didn't seem real." Quinn says that Clea is going to be involved in another relationship. "Interesting things happen when you think you can't trust the people you love anymore. You learn a lot about yourself. You learn a lot about what trust really is. Doc and Clea really deserve an adult relationship, so they might be on the rocks for a while. I don't think there are that many adult love relationships in comics. Maybe it's just because the medium is so minimalist, or because we're all scared that if we don't have enough big fights and stuff flying around, that we'll lose our readers. I think the readers can handle a real drama.

"It's going to be a big story when Clea comes back and she tells Stephen Strange she needs something new from him, she needs something she never got, and he has to...has to see who he is at that time."

With this new, darker look for the sorcerer supreme comes another change as well: Dr. Strange is now one of the Midnight Sons, those superheroes who inhabit the darker corners of the Marvel Universe.

"First of all, we've decided that there's not going to be another crossover for quite some time," Quinn

Art: Mark Buckingham



As the "Strangers Among Us" storyline gets underway, writer David Quinn promises "it will answer 'What happened to Dr. Strange?'"

I see these heroes is that they're the Dark Side. They're the only people on the dark side who are able to bring in some light. They're all fallen angels, they all have an evil side to them. They all own their own shadow side; but, they have a certain amount of moral courage. They're not the daylight heroes. They're never going to function as a team. You can just forget that right now. However, they have a relationship, they have interaction.

"As of the middle of the 'Strangers Among Us' storyline, basically, the rest of the Midnight Sons who survive the Siege of Darkness and go into the next few months, they go after Doc's head. They want him to just cut it out, whatever he's doing, and explain himself.

says, which must come as a relief to a scripter who took over the writing chores on *Dr. Strange* in the midst of the "Siege of Darkness" megacrossover spanning all the Midnight Sons titles. "That's good because it means the interaction the characters do have will be more character-driven and less event-driven. It's a natural relationship [between Strange and the rest of the Midnight Sons]. He's not as hands-on as Professor X but he takes that role. He may do it in a very indirect or sometimes even manipulative way, but that's who he is for them.

"I can only say, of course, how it's going to work in my book. And in my book, the Midnight Sons *hate* the way Strange has done things, for quite some time now. They consistently feel betrayed and pissed off by this seemingly arrogant magician who treats them all like they're children, even calls them children. Strange's going through a hard time, and he has little patience for hot-headed, teeth-gritting motorcycle riders who act first and think later. Guys like Sam Buchanan from *Darkhold* whose attitude is 'point a gun—if in doubt, point a gun.' The Midnight Sons are fun to work with.

"They now have a partnership, Strange and the Midnight Sons, as of *Midnight Sons Unlimited*, they've declared a formal partnership. It's not like being an Avenger. I mean, the way



The face is familiar, but just who is this man known as Dr. Stephen?

Design & Layout: Cathrin Lee

Art: Jeff Johnson/Fred Harper



"SCOP EYING MORBIUS"
"HES BEEN HERE WHILE HESNT IT?"

Morbius looks for the man he knows as Stephen Strange, and believes he has been found. Or has he?

Art: Melvin Rubi/Fred Harper



"I have a lot of sympathy for someone who has taken on all the responsibility that Stephen Strange has," the writer says.

Wong's back, and in a possibly familiar role. In fact, Clea's back too.



Art: Mark Buckingham

Doc learns something from this. And so do they. He has to fight his own family. There's a lot of challenge for all of them to progress to the next level as a result of that conflict. It's a dysfunctional family, what can I tell you?"

Quinn points out that Nightmare is a member of Strange's rogues' gallery who holds a particular attraction to him. "Nightmare is a great character. Actually, I would like to do a whole series with that character, we'll see if they let me.

"Fear is such a profound part of our lives. We all have a real relationship with fear, and Nightmare is the lord of fear. So, we all have a relationship with Nightmare. And I just think his realm is such a rich place to tell so many different kinds of cool stories. Also, I have a story I've wanted to do since the very first day I started writing springboards for Marvel to try to get the *Dr. Strange* job. I've had this dream story I wanted to do of Nightmare considering quitting his job. I love Nightmare."

Quinn says, "When I inherited Victoria Montesi [one of the characters from the old *Darkhold* book], she was pregnant with [elder god] Chthon, a Chthon-spawn. I thought that was interesting. I thought, 'OK, I can do something with that.' But, all I've done so far is what you saw in *Dr. Strange* #61. I'm sure that asked more questions than it answered.

"What's interesting is, keep an eye out for the rest of the Chthon cast of characters. Chthon has a relationship going back, not just with the *Darkhold* Redeemers, but with *Modred*. *Modred*, of course, basically has his own free will except when it comes to Chthon's desire, and then he has to bend to Chthon's will. He's going to be a lot of trouble for *Dr. Strange* in the future, because if *Dr. Strange* is trying to stall or somehow control Victoria's child-bearing experience, then he has an enemy in *Modred*. And *Modred* can be pretty powerful. He can change alliances faster than we can blink our eyes, so you gotta watch out for him. That'll be interesting.

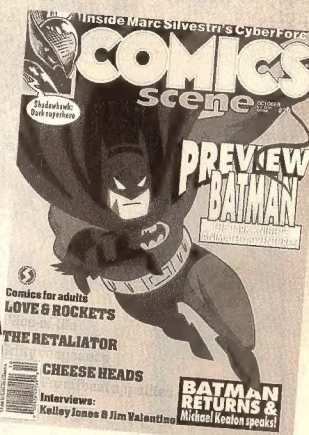
"Also the *Scarlet Witch* has a relationship with Chthon as she was—oh, I'm going to say this wrong—she was tainted by Chthon, an experience that really just drove her a little bit crazy a few years back. I know other groups at Marvel are using the *Scarlet Witch* a lot, so I may not be using her right away. But anyone in the Marvel Universe who's associated with magic is going to be affected by *Salome* and *Strange*.

"I'm trying to throw a lot into this book," Quinn says, "and I'm always being reminded by my editor—God

(continued on page 62)

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Fighting for right, War Machine takes on the world.

By
DREW
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IRON WARRIOR

He was the bodyguard and pilot of the world's greatest industrialist. He was a superhero in borrowed armor. He was lied to, deceived and betrayed. But that's all over now.

After years spent in Iron Man's shadow, James Rhodes is now taking off in *War Machine*, an ongoing series written by Len Kaminski and Scott M. Benson, with artwork by Gabe Gecko and Pam Eklund. As the series opens, "Rhodey" is trying to figure out where his life should go, now that he has split from Stark Enterprises and the Avengers. First, he must get over the pain of Tony Stark's betrayal.

"During the period where the world believed Stark dead [*Iron Man* #284-290], Stark had bequeathed control of

Stark Enterprises and a suit of Iron Man armor to Rhodes in the hope that he would carry on in both roles," says Kaminski. "Rhodes didn't exactly want to do that at first, given his previous miserable experiences with temporary Iron Man duty, but he felt to refuse that legacy would be a betrayal of Stark's memory."

"When Stark was brought out of cryonic suspension and revealed to Rhodes that his 'death' had been an elaborate ruse, Rhodes wanted to beat him till he couldn't bleed anymore. His best friend, a man he admired and trusted literally with his life, had lied to him."

Rhodes was going to leave the armor behind, but decided that there was too much good he could do with it, as opposed to being an ordinary man. But all he has decided, as *War Machine* #1 opens, is that he doesn't want to be an average superhero.

"He did the Avengers thing and that wasn't all that satisfying—beating up costumed fruitcakes bent on conquering the world may be a job somebody has to do, but it's reactive rather than proactive," Kaminski notes. "All it really does is maintain the status quo, and for most of the world, the status quo is pretty damn awful. In that sense, the standard superhero routine doesn't accomplish all that much, and Rhodes has had enough."

"Nobody's using their special gifts to make things better for all those folks

who aren't lucky enough to be technological wizards or radioactive mutants, the ones who go through horrible things every day of their lives. That's the kind of thing Rhodey wants to apply himself to," Benson says. "What he's going to find is that the problems of the world are just too huge and complex to be solved by lining up the culprits and punching them. So, he'll end up using every ounce of his intelligence, resources, passion and energy to try to make a difference, for a very limited return. It'll be frustrating at times, and there'll be moments when Rhodey wonders if it's all worth it. It's our feeling in this book that committed, determined people can make a difference, if they have the time, energy and the will to keep fighting."

To accomplish his goals, Rhodey finds himself joining an international organization called Worldwatch, described by Benson as equal parts Amnesty International, C.A.R.E. and the Impossible Missions Force (of *Mission: Impossible*).

Worldwatch "uses political, economic and data-gathering resources to aid trouble spots everywhere in the world," Benson explains. "Where possible, Worldwatch will operate within the system; however, when all avenues of diplomacy and reason have failed, it has a last-ditch enforcement arm: War Machine."

The organization is the life's work of Vincent Cetewayo, described by Kaminski as "a former political prisoner who has gone on to become an in-

Fighting for a difference will "be frustrating at times," says Benson, "and there'll be moments when Rhodey wonders if it's all worth it."

"We may try to force Rhodey down the Tony Stark path, but he won't let us," notes Scott Benson. "He's just too much his own man."

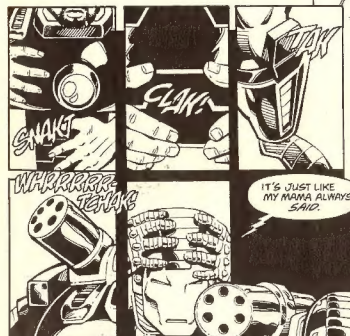
ternationally-known activist for human rights. Cetewayo has realized the world's problems are bigger than any one man—what they need is an organization that will pursue them in the same aggressive manner that multinational corporations pursue profits. And the man he wants to head that organization is someone who has been on both the battlefield and in the boardroom: James Rhodes. The problem is that Rhodes is still feeling so burned by Stark that he doesn't even want to talk about taking that kind of job."

Benson says the events of their first story arc, guest-starring Cable, Deathlok and Nick Fury, causes Rhodes to re-evaluate his decision. By climbing on board, he gains his supporting cast—Worldwatch's directors and field agents.

"There's Dr. Randal Jeffries, futurist, geopolitical analyst and former British government advisor," Benson begins. "He's sort of a benign Henry Kissinger with the brilliance of Alvin Toffler [author of *Future Shock*]. Rhodey and Jeffries will have a solid, mutually respectful relationship. It's Jeffries' job to keep Rhodey and the team up to date on the intricate chess moves of world politics and suggest possible ramifications and courses of action."

"Our second banana," Kaminski continues, "who fulfills sort of the same role that Rhodes did in *Iron Man*, is Sheva Joseph, former agent of both Israel's Mossad and S.H.I.E.L.D."

"Sheva is a tough, slightly cynical 'dirty tricks' veteran who nevertheless retains a small core of idealism," Benson says. "She's stubborn, though, and apt to lock horns with Rhodey now and then, just as he used to with Tony





Art: Gabriel Gecko/Pam Elbaum

Stark in the good old days. Then, there's Rebecca Bergier, originally Mr. Cetewayo's executive assistant and now in charge of WW's day-to-day operations, whom Cetewayo hired away from a UN administrative post."

And as for the armor's 10,000-mile checkup? "To maintain the War Machine armor, Rhodes hires Archie Park away from Stark Enterprises' engineering department," Benson says. "Archie's a Korean-American in his early 20s, a sort of computer-engineering prodigy who was starting to get bored working for Tony."

"And we haven't forgotten Rae Lacoste, Rhodes' lady," Kaminski notes. "She'll be joining Worldwatch's executive board."

They add that Lacoste, unknown to many readers, has degrees in business and law, and owns her own company; her "beauty salon" days (during David Michelinie's tenure as writer on *Iron Man*) were just a sideline.

"These people will all be fully aware that Jim Rhodes is War Machine," Benson says. "As for the differences between Rhodes and Tony, Jim will find that he's now in a position more like Tony's than ever before, as a man with an enormous amount of responsibility. He will continue his resolve to do things differently than Stark did, but will discover that's not so easy. As a result, he'll begin to understand some of the pressures that made Stark behave the way he did."

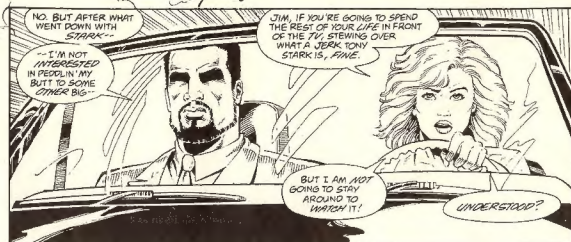
According to Kaminski, War Machine and Worldwatch "are fighting to bring about change in a world that badly needs some."

The bad blood between these two men comes to a boil during a projected *Iron Man/Force Works/War Machine* crossover, wherein the two are forced to work together—and must resolve some of their problems if they're to succeed.

"They have a new relationship now, and are really on equal footing," Kaminski says. "This has never been the case before—it was true that Rhodey was a strong person in his own right, but Tony was always calling the shots. Now, they have to work together. It doesn't happen smoothly, or easily."

A big organization like Worldwatch needs big opposition, which Kaminski and Benson intend to deliver.

"There's the Weapons Shop, a U.S. government weapons installation that has been testing a new and frightening weapons technology, and holds the



Art: Gabriel Gecko/Pam Elbaum

Rhodey is wary of Stark now, notes Kaminski, "A man he admired and trusted literally with his life, had lied to him."



Art: Gabriel Gecko

entire world hostage," Benson says.

"We've also got Global Processing. This is a vast, clandestine organization that provides 'one-stop shopping' for ethnic cleansing to various governments; sort of what the Nazi Party would have been if they had used modern corporate and marketing techniques," Benson explains. "They not only round up and eliminate your 'undesirables,' they also provide the PR and media spins necessary to keep the rest of the world from finding out about it."

"They're sort of 'Genocide Incorporated,'" Kaminski says. "And Death-toll—he's a mercenary/contract killer with a gimmick that's hard to beat: He's almost impossible to kill. As long as the number of times he has been fatally injured is less than the number of people he has killed, he'll come back to life."

Right off the bat, though, War Machine has to contend with some heavy hitters in the Marvel Universe. "As

issue #1 opens, Jim Rhodes will be at loose ends," Benson says. "He'll meet up with Vincent Cetewayo and become involved in a very nasty situation in Imapya, the country that once held Cetewayo as a political prisoner. Then, he'll get involved with Cable, Deathlok and Nick Fury, each of whom has his own interest in and position on the Imapyan conflict—and none of whom will necessarily be on the same side as War Machine."

"Issues #1-4 are more or less our 'origin story,' which sets up the series' premise and War Machine's *raison d'être*," Kaminski explains.

"After that, we'll set Rhodey into motion as director of Worldwatch and deal with the world reaction to his role in the Imapyan situation. Based on what War Machine does in the first arc, there will be a number of folks who want to keep him from sticking his gloves into world events," Benson says.

"And some of those people hire Deathlok to stop him before he makes any more trouble," Kaminski adds.

"Then," notes Benson, "we get into the crossover, when the Mand—"

The "big gun" approach got the book approved, but Kaminski says, "We're offering much more with this character."



Art: Gabriel Gecko

"Shh—not yet, not yet!" Kaminski interrupts.

"We don't have any cameos planned after the initial story arc," Benson recovers. "We want to give Rhodey and his group some room to establish themselves before throwing the rest of the Marvel Universe at them."

The writers say the book has a specific mindset: Taking responsibility for helping the world around you. "It'll be [a 'green' series] in the sense that Worldwatch has a very activist progressive agenda that'll shape both the missions that War Machine ends up on



Design & Layout: Caliban Lee

Art: Gabriel Gecko/Pam Elbaum

As War Machine discovered while an Avenger, "The standard superhero routine doesn't accomplish all that much," Kaminski notes.

Rhodes and Worldwatch will try to solve problems through diplomacy first, but if that doesn't work...enter War Machine.



Art: Gabriel Gecko/Bob Wiacko

and the types of stories we do. One of the things that really interests me about the premise we've concocted is that it's the polar opposite of the traditional organization so frequently

used in adventure fiction. S.H.I.E.L.D., U.N.C.L.E., even the Avengers or the JLA are all basically right-wing reactionary groups dedicated to preserving the established order of things, whereas Worldwatch—and War Machine—are fighting to bring about change in a world that badly needs some. It's a more admirable goal than 'Making the World Safe for Democracy' or Capitalism or whatever," Kaminski says.

Kaminski and Benson are aware of the ironies involved in having a hit-tech knight fighting for the cause of peace. In fact, his name was meant to reflect that irony—but somebody jumped the gun.

"When Rhodey appeared in *X-Force* in his current armor, Fabian [Nicieza, writer] used the name 'War Machine,' which we hadn't yet explained in the series. We were waiting to unveil it later on, once we had set up Worldwatch—so things got a little ahead of themselves," Kaminski says ruefully.

"It actually stands for Worldwatch Armored Response," Benson explains. "I wanted to work that into the logo, but Nel [Yontom, editor] didn't think it could be made to work."

(continued on page 60)

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Howard Chaykin introduces heroes who are right up his alley.

By KIM HOWARD JOHNSON

Superheroes boil down to three myths—the Superman myth, the Captain America myth and the Batman myth. Birth, re-creation or revenge," says Howard Chaykin.

Now, the creator of *American Flagg!* and *Black Kiss* (profiled in CS #2 & #4) is trying to craft his own new superhero myth. *Power & Glory*, Chaykin's creation for Malibu's new Bravura line of creator-owned comics, is his own unique look at the superhero in today's real world.

"*Power & Glory* is basically what happens when the United States government gets into the business of creating a superhero," Chaykin explains. "They figure that the 1980s made it possible for an audience to buy into the idea of quick fixes and easy solutions to complex problems.

"They find Allan Powell, the most likely guy who can fit their pattern. Powell is A-Pex, which stands for American Powerhouse Experiment. He's an agent of the Central Intelligence Agency, and he turns out to be absolutely sensational at public relations. The guy who trains him, Michael Gorski, ultimately ends up doing all of the dirty work behind the scenes, while the guy who's in the costume gets all the credit and attention and licensing and women and money and glory and..."

REAL WORLD BRAVADO

Chaykin jokingly describes the relationship between Gorski and Powell as "bad cop/anti-Christ. They absolutely loathe each other," he says. "They represent two extreme poles of American attitudes."

Power & Glory is also a comment on Chaykin's view of heroism. "My take on heroism has always been constant."

he says. "The average comic book hero is a hero because the story says he is. He's totally unmotivated. Comic book heroes are almost always motivated by revenge. If you're a grown-up living in the real world, you know that revenge does nothing but get you killed. I tend to do heroes who are motivated by guilt, shame and moral responsibility,

which are emotions and sensibilities more recognizable to me than 'My parents got shot when I was 11, so I've got to go out, put on my long underwear and beat up petty criminals.'

"And, *Power & Glory* is about that idea. It's about two guys, one who looks like a hero and one who really is. The fact is that it's much easier to di-



gest the one that looks the part, because he's much more charming than the one who is a hero—frankly, he's a skeptical son of a bitch."

More than anything else, Chaykin says *Power & Glory* is about media manipulation. "I have a real aversion to the concept of multi-culturalism," he observes. "People assume, on the basis of that, that I'm becoming a right-winger, and nothing could be further from the truth. I believe in a pluralistic society."



If the government got into the superhero business, *Power & Glory* would be the outcome, according to Howard Chaykin.

I have a real loathing for political correctness. I live in this country, so I don't have to be politically correct. I don't have any desire to have the Constitution protect my right to good manners. Bear in mind, this is also a very funny, very violent, very nasty comic book that I'm doing here! This is my take on superhero comics. It's also about transformation, because every one of the characters in this book goes through a major transformation."

Chaykin's not sure whether *Power & Glory* will appeal to the typical superhero fan. "That's a really tough question. Frankly, if I were aiming this at the typical superhero reader, I would simply draw tons of grinning heads and big teeth, women with pneumatic boobs and absurd anatomy and do two panels on a page. The fact is, I have to assume that there's a certain part of that audience that has finally awakened to the idea that they're not going to get rich on their millions of *Pow-Wow Comics*, and that they're still interested in comics because they're interested in the read."

"I don't know who the hell's buying comics out there, I really have no idea. I'm not really doing these comics for myself—I still believe in producing commercial work. If I were doing it for myself, I would be Art Spiegelman or Harvey Pekar. I've often described my position in comic books as right of center, because I have no real interest in doing the kind of work that Harvey and Art do, but by the same token, I have no interest in doing the kind of work that Rob Liefeld and Todd McFarlane do—although, they seem to be interested in using a lot of my layouts," Chaykin notes. "I like doing pulpy adventure stories with an attitude. Attitude has come to mean a little 15-year-old punk with a long sweatshirt and a baseball cap turned around and striking a pose of hostile angst. Attitude, for me, is having a point-of-view and being able to express it articulately, and standing by that point-of-view."



With *Power & Glory*, Chaykin is "simply doing how I feel a super-powered figure might function in the real world."

"What you've got in comics are a lot of guys who are social liberals who still like the idea of drawing good guys beating the shit out of evildoers. The problem is that evildoers are not petty thugs, and getting dressed up in leather underwear and going out at night and beating the shit out of criminals is not an effective way to fight crime! But hey, we live in an age of cynical myth, where actors like Arnold Schwarzenegger or Bruce Willis, who are enormously mythic, remain cynical figures. The two things almost contradict each other, but they work for the audience."

Power & Glory is not Chaykin's attempt to deconstruct superheroes, he explains. "The idea of deconstructionism sort of goes with post-modernism," he remarks. "It's a phrase created by critics to justify their behavior. I'm simply doing how I feel a super-powered figure might function in the real world."

"One of the things I've always found amusing about comic book superheroes, and comic books in general in the post-Stan Lee generation, is that for comic book stuff to work, you have to bend, toss out or completely eliminate anything like a real world existence behind this material. Starting with the basic idea, these guys are running around with their underwear outside of their pants, fighting crime for no real reason that anybody can figure out, other than because that's what heroes do. There's no motivation, there's no morality, there's no actual sense of why people behave this way."

Let's face it, in the real world, power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. With great power comes great responsibility? Horseshit! With great power comes great corruption! That's the way it really works. Nothing has been demonstrated, certainly in my lifetime, that anybody really behaves in a totally altruistic way, especially when you give them a really big gun."

Chaykin explains that reality has an enormous influence on his comics work. "I'm a great believer in the real world. I live here," he says. "I'm a politically liberal guy who reads a broad spectrum of political and social thought; the fact that I read sets me apart from a great number of comic book fans and talent. I like to incorporate what I know of real life into the work I do."

Although much of Chaykin's work reflects the real world, he admits he has to make concessions for it all to mesh with the superhero genre.

"If most comic books had real-world rules imposed on them, they wouldn't work," he announces. "When you start deconstructing most comics characters and their universes, you stop dead at the very point of reference of motivation. Why do these characters do what they do? A couple of years back, there was a big brouhaha when one of the comics fan magazines referred to most comic books as 'melodrama.' But the fact is, by definition, most comic books are melodrama, unmotivated drama. The single most honest superhero comic today is *Marshal Law*. It gets down to serious brass tacks about what these guys are doing and why."

Chaykin agrees that *Power & Glory* is his reaction to everything he has seen in superheroes. "I was a Marvel fan—I came to Marvel from DC, and all I read as a kid were superhero comics," he says. "I didn't discover other kinds of comics until I was into my mid-tens."

"When the old guys who ran comic books in my childhood died and were replaced, they were replaced by comic book superhero fanboys who basically eliminated other kinds of comics. It's a major contributing factor to the continuing popularity of superheroes."

"Basically, fandom has come in four phases. The first fandom was E.C. fandom, and when you read the letters in the letter columns in E.C., there's a youthfulness to the stuff, but you're also still reading letters written by men and women, boys and girls, who are comfortable and used to communicating and corresponding in words and language and written letters. Second fandom came with guys like Roy Thomas, Biljo White and Jerry Bails, guys who were big fans of Golden Age comics and who also really applauded what Julie Schwartz was doing at DC in the late '50s and early '60s—the Silver Age. Third fandom was the group I came in with, Marvel fandom. What you've got now is post-Marvel fandom, which is basically the guys who collect trading cards with staples in them."

Chaykin admits he is concerned about the lack of depth, subtlety and story in some of the more popular fan-favorite comics that have also attracted speculators. "When I first



In a world where the bad guys are bad and the good guys can be worse, Chaykin plies his trade.

came out to the West Coast, I made a remark to a [film] studio executive who was rather condescending to comics. I said, 'My audience reads!' But, it's no longer true. The guys who buy Howard Chaykin comic books tend to read them, because my stuff isn't worth buying from a collector's point-of-view. I would love it if it

were, but I don't pander to the audience's tastes.

"I don't tell the audience what it wants to hear, I tell it what I think it needs to hear. I don't believe in comics as a democratic process. Years ago, I was at a comic con where a fanboy got up and said he didn't like mini-series, because he couldn't write in fast enough to affect the story's outcome. That was an absolute stunner for me. I loved it! I'm not here for milk and cookies," he says.

When Chaykin talks about comics fandom, he is the first to admit that he's a member of that group. "I'm speaking for myself here, as well," he points out. "At age 17, I weighed 265 pounds—I'm just the archetypal fanboy. The only kind of assault that the contemporary comic book fanboy really can take is from *Lobo*—as loud and obnoxious as the comic book is, it's still good-natured ribbing. I don't good-naturedly rib! There's this idea about 'Hey, kids, let's put out a comic book!' It's a tougher process than that—or it should be."

"Today, a NEW American HERO explodes across the star-spangled sky--"

"--A new AMERICAN solution to the problems of the NEXT American century."

"GOD bless (choke) the USA--"

"The average comic book hero is a hero because the story says he is," Chaykin explains.



"I'm not interested in producing the kind of work that gives a warm feeling in your heart that everything is OK," notes the creator.

"With great power comes great responsibility?" asks Chaykin. "With great power comes great corruption!"



All Art: By and Copyright © 1993 Howard Chaykin/Courtesy Mallibu

Chaykin admits that he feels some frustration to see relatively shallow, "trading-card" comics selling more than a million copies, while more thought-provoking fare is often overlooked.

"What's more frustrating for me is that there's no one doing work out there that pisses me off," he says. "There are a lot of guys making more money than I am—and that pisses me off—but I wish there was someone out there doing work that I could compete with. I periodically buy these trading card comics, and it seems to me that they're simply an extension of fanzines in the sense that they do work that is diametrically opposed to what I was taught to do. They're 'posing comic books.'"

"Dwight Decker did a column a couple of years back in a fanzine saying that comic books and professional

wrestling are directly related. And I buy that—I think it's true. Wrestling is not a sport, it's a posing game, and comic books have become the same. When I look at the contemporary hot comics, they don't have to have any continuity, because nobody's reading them. But hey, let that audience continue to think they're going to make a killing collecting millions and millions of copies of these books, and let me continue to reach an audience that's interested in content."

The new Bravura line, which includes Jim Starlin, Dan Jurgens, Dan Brereton, Gil Kane and Steven Grant, has gotten Chaykin excited about doing comics again. "It's nice to be working with guys whose work I respect, and not have to apologize for the other guys I'm working with," he laughs. "I've known Starlin since we were boys, and the same with

Walt Simonson. I worked for Gil Kane when I was a boy; I was Gil's assistant when I was 19. These are guys who write and draw comics to be read, who recognize the idea that comic book pictures are pictures with literary value. That's not a judgment of quality of literary value, mind you, but it's a picture that tells a story. And that's the major draw."

Although the most recent wave of creator-owned comics—including the Bravura line—seem to stem from the creation of Image, Chaykin points out that he has been doing creator-owned comics since his work for StarReach in the '70s.

"The idea of creator-owned comics is nothing new for me," he says. "The idea of a bunch of guys going out and doing basically imitations of the X-Men, and creating endless numbers of idiotically-named superheroes and owning them—big deal!"

According to Chaykin, superheroes still work for many of today's readers, but for the wrong reasons. "They feel completely impotent, they feel completely unable to make any effect on their own world and it's easier to turn it over to a superhero. As I've said more than once, comic book fans have a great desire to believe in the concept of absolute good and absolute evil. Unfortunately, it isn't that way, regardless of what Steve Ditko says!"

"I'm not interested in producing the kind of work that gives a warm feeling in your heart that everything is OK. There are a lot of guys who can do that. Basically, most comic books today are Archie comics with superhero outfits. I'm trying to reach an audience that goes to movies, reads books and is interested in visual narrative. I simply put the work out there and hope the audience finds it."

Aside from comics, Chaykin keeps busy with television work. He served as a staff writer for the late, great CBS-TV *Flash* series (STARLOG #160), and continues working in TV today. "I just finished a six-month stint on *Viper* for Paramount, which began airing in January," he says. "I was story editor on the show, and wrote a bunch of episodes. And, I'm still waiting to hear on a number of film projects. I'm always working!"

Howard Chaykin says he's still having a great time doing comics, and still looks forward to doing plenty within the medium. "I was planning on doing a 300-page black-and-white crime novel in comics form, but I decided to simply write it as a novel—Hollywood executives perceive comics as a genre, as opposed to a medium," he says. "I've done lots of different comics. I've always wanted to do a romance book, though there's no market for it. I'm just doing what I want to do. I'm a happy guy!"

GREEN DIRECTIONS

In darkest night, they're recharging Green Lantern for a brand-new day.

After a couple of turbulent years in which its two most popular characters, Superman and Batman, underwent extensive and irrevocable changes, DC Comics has decided to retire Hal Jordan from his position as Earth's Green Lantern. But rather than send him off with a pension, a gold watch and a handshake, writer Ron Marz and the *Green Lantern* editorial team have decided on a far more cataclysmic *bon voyage*. They have chosen to wipe the slate virtually clean, dismantling the Green Lantern Corps, transforming Hal Jordan beyond all recognition and bestowing the ring on a younger, completely untested man.

This momentous upheaval has its roots in the "Reign of the Superman" saga. Assisted by the cyborg Superman, interstellar psychopath Mongul destroyed Coast City. Hal Jordan's hometown. Hal's loss and rage lead him to attempt to re-create Coast City with his ring. But when he discovers he doesn't have enough power to do the job, he sets off for the planet Oa, planning to take more energy from the Guardians and pursue this mad folly of trying to have everything back as it was.

Because the ring should never be used for personal gain, the Guardians attempt to strip Hal of his powers by sending other members of the Corps against him. Hal defeats them all and eventually reaches Oa, where the Guardians are forced, as their last defense, to release Hal's arch-nemesis Sinestro from his captivity within the power battery.

Hal destroys Sinestro, but in the process manages to kill one of his best friends, Kilowog. As the sorrow of the situation washes over him, Hal sees himself as beyond redemption. He walks into the power battery, and in doing so destroys most of the remaining members of the Corps and the Guardians.



When the last Green Lantern "merges from the battery," he isn't Hal Jordan anymore. Instead, he's an incredibly powerful, incredibly distant being who wants to be called Parallax. His precise abilities remain a mystery, but he seems to have achieved a higher state of being.

Marz, scripter for a trio of Marvel books with cosmic and SF themes—*Thor*, *Silver Surfer* and *Secret Defenders*—was chosen to orchestrate the changing of the Green Lantern guard, taking over with issue #48. "My first issue dealt with Hal's psyche, his memories of Coast City, his sorrow over what hap-

pened to it," he says. "I became fairly well attached to him, which is good, I guess. Hopefully, what happened to him became all the more poignant because of it."

At the end of issue #50, Marz had Ganthet, the Guardian spotlighted in the popular Prestige Format one-shot *Ganthet's Tale* by John Byrne and Larry Niven, travel to Earth and give the sole remaining emerald ring to Kyle Rayner, a young freelance artist living in L.A.

Not exactly the obvious choice for superheros, Kyle at first doesn't have too much of a clue what's happening. And unlike his predecessors, he has no one to show him the ropes.

Marz describes Kyle as someone who lives for the moment and hasn't yet found his direction in life. "He's the kind of freelance artist who'll do enough work to make the rent for that month, but beyond that he's more interested in going out and having fun than being chained to a drawing board. Once he's saddled with this ring and its responsibility, he must come to terms with the way his life has been and see how it's going to change with

Believing that the symbol is still important, Ganthet re-creates Hal's destroyed ring and searches for another hero.





Not only does he have to learn the ring on his own, but Kyle "must come to terms with the way his life has been," Marz says.



Mongul wants his revenge on Green Lantern, any Green Lantern, and it's up to Superman to come to Kyle's rescue.

this added burden."

According to Marz, a character like Kyle gives the book a more contemporary spin. "Hal Jordan was, in many ways, the typical square-jawed hero who did the right thing, all the way up until the end. Kyle is a more irresponsible, reckless person, more reflective of society today."

Issue #51 fully introduces Kyle and his girl friend Alex following their cameo at the end of #48. It also gives readers their first look at a new villain called Ohm, whom Marz describes as "sort of 'Iron Man squared.'" Ohm wears a full suit of body armor and uses electricity as his weapon, hence the name. Kyle comes into conflict with him when Ohm tries to suck the electricity right out of LA.

The two slug it out on the shopping mecca, Rodeo Drive.

While Kyle is busy with Ohm, Mongul escapes from captivity and, bent on avenging his defeat, begins tracking down his hated opponents. Superman happens to be in outer space, but Mongul homes in on Kyle, not caring that a different man now wears the Green Lantern costume.

Plans for issue #53 call for Superman to return and lend a hand against the alien megalomaniac. Marz says, "This will be Kyle's first meeting with any hero in the DC Universe, so we figured we would go straight to the top of the ladder."

For the moment, the exact reason why Kyle, out of billions of possible candidates, is chosen to carry on the awesome Green Lantern legacy remains somewhat mysterious. Marz is willing to chalk it up mostly to expediency. "When Ganthet gives the ring to Kyle, it's not like he has the time or energy to scour the universe for the best possible choice. The Green Lanterns of Earth have been a boon to the Corps before, so when he winds up there, Ganthet finds someone suitable as quickly as possible."

Why has DC embarked on such a radical make-over for such a well-established commodity? "The rationale for DC was that sales were lagging," says Marz. "They wanted something to give the book a kick in the butt. As it was handed down to me, the editors had decided that *Green Lantern* should be one of their flagship books, right behind *Superman* and *Batman*. The way the book was heading, it was never going to do that."

Marz claims that readers weren't noticing the book and many had the perception that Green Lantern was yesterday's hero. "It's kind of ironic that the bestselling recent *Green Lantern*, issue #46, sold because of the appearance of Superman in it," the writer notes. "I guess it's a sad commentary when a book isn't noticed because of its star, but only because of the guest star."

According to Marz, the changes in *Green Lantern* have generated a fair amount of excitement at the DC editorial offices. "From what I've heard," he says, "a lot of editors are asking to have Hal as Parallax or Kyle as Green Lantern make appearances in their books. There are fairly concrete plans for Kyle to interact with the New Titans, and Parallax will play a major role in this summer's *Zero Hour* mini-series."

While Kyle Rayner's personality isn't hard to get a handle on, the nature of Hal Jordan's cosmic metamorphosis eludes easy description. Is Parallax a hero, a villain or something much more ambiguous?

Says Marz, "Parallax is on a higher plane. I don't think you can view Hal as human anymore. He has been imbued with this massive amount of energy. No one could call him a hero anymore; he is more of a tragic figure."

Even his powers are still shrouded in mystery. Because the source of his transformation is the power battery, it's logical to assume that he has taken on some of its attributes, only on a scale heretofore unimaginable. "I would imagine that Parallax could do virtually anything," Marz says. "He'll be alone in space, very much a character insulated from humanity and the rest of the universe's inhabitants."

What about the other two former Green Lanterns of Earth? Guy Gardner has his own, unconnected monthly title (now retitled *Warrior* and written



Facing Sinestro in a battle to the finish, Hal realizes that he's not the same man anymore, not the same hero.

by Beau Smith) and isn't likely to interact with Kyle, but Marz says that John Stewart may eventually make a guest appearance. "We haven't done anything with him since the end of *Mosaic*. I do want to bring him in at some point, but exactly how we're going to do that hasn't been nailed down yet."

Working with Marz on *Green Lantern* are penciller Darrell Banks andinker Romeo Tanghal. Banks' previous credits include *Legion of Superheroes*.

I'm thrilled with what Darrell's doing," raves Mars. "He knows his anatomy, and he knows how to draw, which is a godsend these days. And he's excited about being on the book."

This is his first monthly title from a major publisher. I think many people haven't been exposed to him, and before issue #50, many of them were



GREEN

Hal finally crosses the line, but "keep in mind," notes writer Ron Marz, "the very nature of the Green Lantern Corps was one of change."

He might have followed their exploits, but now from his position, being a hero isn't easy for the newest Green Lantern.



wondering who this guy is. Now they definitely know what he can do."

Given all the changes, it was perhaps inevitable that the new Green Lantern would don a different wardrobe. Marz says, "There was actually a lot of discussion about the new costume. Truthfully, I think Hal's costume was one of the best ever in comics. It's a classic, but for Kyle to have his own identity, he should have his own costume." The new Green Lantern costume is a little sleeker, more "space-age" and features a more three-dimensional domino mask.

Major renovations on a title often attract the attention of curious new readers, but sometimes there can be a backlash as well. Marz says, "As far as alienating the readers, of course it's a concern. But an aspect of this business,

(continued on page 58)

As always, Jim Starlin unleashes adventures of cosmic proportions as well as a demon or two.



By
KIM
HOWARD
JOHNSON

Jim Starlin's newest hero is the product of a mixed marriage. Raymond Stoner's mother is the only survivor of an assault on her town by the demonic "night raiders." His father is one of the supernatural slayers. And Raymond is learning the truth about his past—and his future.

"*Breed* is the story of how Raymond learns to deal with the fact that he's half-human/half-demon," says writer/artist Starlin. "The darker heritage left by his father is coming to haunt him in his everyday life."

However, *Breed* is not a superhero or science fiction title. "It's a horror story with a lot of action and strange beasts," he says. "It's a fairly unique little story that all takes place on Earth between 1949 and the present. It defi-

nately qualifies as horror more than SF, but at the same time, there's plenty of action. It's kind of different, I would have to say."

His current plans are for an 18-issue run on *Breed*, which kicks off the new creator-owned Bravura line for Malibu Comics. "It's a three-part mini-series consisting of six issues each. Basically, they form one story; there's a conclusion at the end of each of the segments. His adventures involve the other half-breeds—*Breed* is short for half-breed—that exist on the Earth, the demons that were his father's kind, and also dealing with the human populace that aren't very aware of his existence. He's also wanted by the law for a crime he *did* commit. *Breed* is the story of a one guy finding how to deal with his Jungian shadow."

Breed was actually conceived for a slightly different format, but Starlin turned it into a comic instead. "Originally, it was going to be an illustrated novel," he explains. "It was a terrific little story, I thought. So, I did some illustrations, and I did



Photo: Maureen McTigue

Starlin is one of the main forces in Bravura, with two books in the line, *Breed* and *Dreadstar*.

about five chapters of it, then took it around to the book companies, because I've had a couple of novels published already. They weren't going to put up an advance to make it worth doing—book sales were slumping at that point, so they were hesitant about trying something as different as an illustrated novel. So, I just sat on it for a few years. Things in my life changed, and I wanted to get back to drawing more than I had been over the last five years. I had been pretty much just writing comics and not really drawing them."

According to Starlin, it wasn't difficult to transfer *Breed* from prose to comic-book form. "I'm staying fairly close to the story. I did do some changes in the visuals. In the novel, he really doesn't change into a monster as much as he does in the comic. I made him more visually horrifying for the comic than I did in the book. It took a few tries to get the right visuals—I played with what he should be as we went along, and he actually does change more as the story goes on."

Breed was actually created when Starlin began musing on the dichotomy between good and evil that exists within most people.

"My original idea was based on living with the dark side of your personality," he explains. "We've all got things we've done in the past that, if we're not exactly ashamed of, we aren't really proud of. There's a dark part to all of us, both as the human race and as individuals. Sometimes the things that are the least appealing

about us are the most necessary, and most people can't live with that. They have trouble dealing with the idea that if you're not perfect, you're not a good person. I see it differently. There are times when the part of you which you usually hide in the closet has to come out! Soldiers realize this in times of war, police have to deal with that part of reality all the time. They don't want to ever pull that gun, but there are times that they have to. *Breed* is about

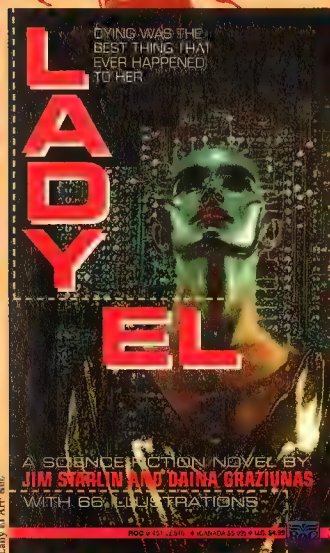
a lot of that. It's about the fact that sometimes you don't have any choice but to let that demon out of the bottle and let it do its thing, because it's part of you."

Starlin is known to many for his work on Marvel's *Warlock* and more recently the *Infinity Gauntlet*, *Infinity War* and *Infinity Crusade* crossover series, as well as his own *Dreadstar*. Although *Breed* does

"It took a few tries to get the right visuals," Jim Starlin notes. "*Breed* changes quite a bit as the series goes along."



Breed is "about the fact that sometimes you don't have any choice but to let that demon out of the bottle and let it do its thing," Starlin notes.



"Breed is 'similar to my other work in that it's about a lone character who's dealing with the demons inside him," Starlin notes.

stand alone, Starlin can point out similarities to his past tales.

"Breed is a much more adult-oriented story than I've ever done at Marvel," he says. "It's not the kind of thing that I could have taken over to Marvel. I did offer it to them at the time, but I knew that they would never buy it. It's similar to my other work in that it's about a lone character who's dealing with the demons inside him—quite literally, this time!—and having to come to terms with his own existence. That's a theme that goes through much of my work."

Dreadstar is also part of the new

No stranger to book publishing, Starlin first planned 'Breed' as an illustrated novel.

Bravura line. The four-issue mini-series is being written by Peter David, however, because Starlin says he didn't have time to script both as long as he was drawing 'Breed. "Peter had a very nice run on Dreadstar, and so when it came time to revive the book, he was the first person I called!"

In fact, 'Breed actually predates Starlin's own involvement with the Bravura line. "When I was working on the Infinity Crusade/Gauntlet/War. I started up on 'Breed, and I did a couple of issues of it without anyone having already agreed to pay for it," he says. "It was just strictly me on spec. Then, when I finished it, I put an ad in the Comic Buyers' Guide saying that interested publishers should contact me. Some were and some weren't, and

I talked with different people and got different offers. I talked with them about the series and what I wanted to do, and at the end, Bravura offered me the best deal with the most control, so I went with them!"

Bravura appeals to Starlin in several ways. "I like the idea of creator-owned characters," he says. "I've been very big on promoting that sort of thing since my days at Epic. I didn't get into

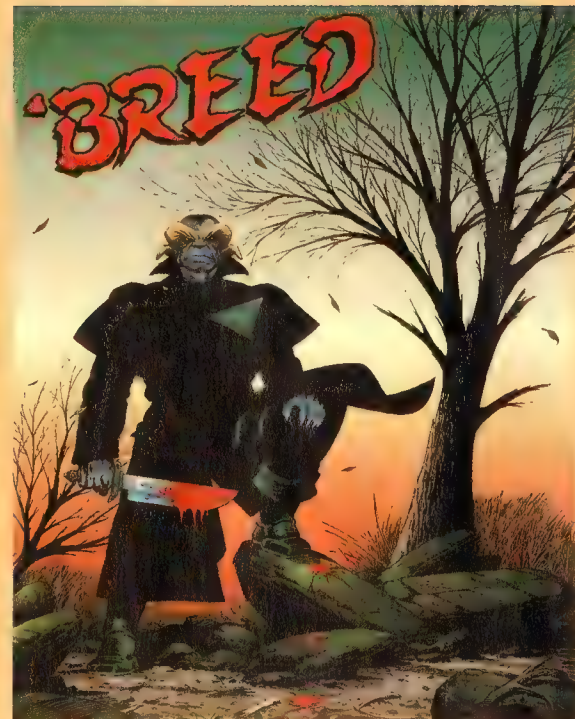


Enjoying his stint on Warlock and the Infinity Watch, Starlin says, "I'm sticking with it for the time being."

it with the idea of starting a new line. I wanted to do 'Breed, and it just so happened that they were starting up Bravura at the time. I guess Howard Chaykin and Walt Simonson were talking with Malibu about this new line, and I came in at the last minute."

Starlin (profiled in CS #19) has been a longtime fighter in the battle for creator rights in comics, and his Dreadstar—which Starlin has managed to hang on to over the years—was previously published by First Comics and Marvel's Epic line. For the Bravura Dreadstar, he has given scripter Peter David free rein.

"Peter hasn't told me what her adventures are all about this time," says Starlin cryptically. "I greatly admire his work. They used to put in a credit during Peter's First Comics run on Dreadstar saying that I was the 'spiritual advisor' on the books, but half the time, I never saw them until they were out on the market. Peter has complete free rein on the series—it's the only way to let a writer like him work. I was a little hesitant, a little leery when he first took over, but as soon as Peter started producing the



"Breed is very down-to-Earth," Starlin says, "a lot of everyday stuff mixed in with some very horrendous stuff."

stuff, I saw that he had a nice comic feel for the characters, which is exactly what it needed. The last part of my run on that was deadly serious, and Peter came along and gave it a nice, light touch. I'm sure he'll bring his sense of humor into this version, along with a very interesting story."

Starlin continues to write Warlock and the Infinity Watch for Marvel. "I don't know how long I'm going to last on that series, but I'm enjoying it, and working with Craig Anderson is fun, so I'm sticking with it for the time being," he says.

In addition to his current projects, some of Starlin's very first work, "Dr. Weird," is seeing print in the pages of Big Bang Comics. "They're reprinting stuff I did back when I was in the service, back in 1968 or '69!" he explains. "I don't even know if I have a copy of it anymore. I'll be curious to see it when it comes out again! I do remember doing a cover for them a couple of years ago—this is something that has been in the works for some time."

The challenges that comics present to Starlin today include finding the time to do everything, he jokes. "I'm starting a private business in this area, and sometimes just getting myself to sit down at the drawing board in the midst of all the other stuff going on in my life is quite a challenge!"

"Actually, the biggest challenge is trying to do new stuff, especially with my art. Everyone thinks of me as this cosmic artist, a guy who does a lot of space stuff, and 'Breed is not going to be that. 'Breed is very down-to-Earth, a lot of everyday stuff mixed in with some very horrendous stuff. There are the macabre, otherworldly elements of the demons, but most of it is going to be grounded in a pretty solid reality that's fairly recognizable, and that's different for me."

Jim Starlin says he has been able to do just about everything he has wanted to do in his comics career. "What I'm doing right now is exactly what I want to be doing," he says. "It's a challenge, even after all this time."

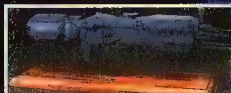
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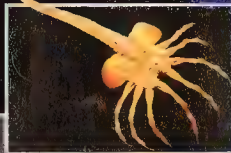
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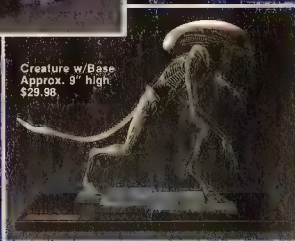
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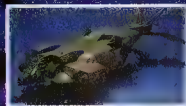
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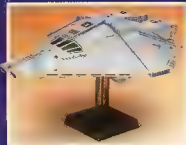
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--ONE OTHER HOLDS BUT A SLIVER OF THE CORPUS POWERS INSIDE HIM--

--THE TERRAN NAMED RICHARD RIDER, WHO DID FIGHT BRAVELY FOR A TIME, IN THE CAUSE OF KANDAR--

BUT HOW CAN THIS COME TO HAVE THE KANDARIN MATRIX WITHIN HIM?

PASSION PLAY

Artist Darick Robertson has his own style and class doing what he loves.

By MAUREEN MCTIGUE

Photo & Selected Art: Courtesy Darick Robertson



This is the most competitive time to be in comics and the most important thing is to love the art, not love what it's about, but love it for yourself. If you don't really care about the business or if you don't really care about its artistic end, you're not going to be really happy or successful, I think, in the business end. It's that passion that will drive you to work harder and you should really do it for yourself, hopefully not to become a big shot." These words of advice come from artist Darick Robertson, someone who knows what it is to simply love his work.

"When I was 17, I started, writing and drawing a book called *Space Beaver* that was put out by a very small independent company. We struggled to keep it going for 11 issues. At the end, I ended up getting work from some other independents. Then climbing up the ladder, I did a little seven-pager for

Eclipse, some *Miracle Man* and some work for Innovation. And I did *Apache Dick* for Malibu, which is kind of ironic because I've come full circle with that company.

"I started with Marvel on *Wolverine* #54," continues Robertson. "I had just come off of doing *Justice League Europe*; [editor] Brian Augustyn didn't want to use me, said I wasn't ready for a monthly book and about that same time [editor] Bob Harras offered me *Wolverine*. So, I wasn't ready to do a monthly DC book but I was ready for *Wolverine* #54," he laughs. "Go figure."

"From there, I got to be good friends with [writer] Fabian Nicieza. And when Mark Bagley decided to leave *New Warriors*, Marvel felt I was ready for a monthly.

Known primarily as an artist, Robertson is branching out into writing and creating his own characters.

"I love working on [The New Warriors]; Fabian's terrific and his being as good a friend as he is makes it all the better because there's a real chemistry. I've never had any real restrictions and I've always had very encouraging editors. So, I've had a really good time on Warriors; I'm very proud of the work I've done. I wouldn't stick with the book this long if I didn't believe it was a really underrated and good product."

"In Warriors, I have a real affection for Speedball. I made my writing debut at Marvel with a Speedball story [New Warriors Annual #3]. Next annual will feature a follow-up in which we'll see a dark side to Speedball. I'm just going to mostly write that one, and break it down and Stephen J.B. Jones will do the finished pencils."

Issue #43 brought back Marvel Boy newly released from prison with a new identity. This event heralded major changes for all the Warriors. "Marvel Boy now becomes Justice, with a new look. He has a darker edge to him. The time in prison changed him; he's now a different kind of character. Firestar and Justice end up going out and joining the Acolytes, which is going to be very frightening and dismaying for the Warriors."

Namorita will metamorphosize into more of a primitive Atlantean. The possibility of her transformation being

Robertson wants Speedball "to become the grunge rocker of the Marvel Universe."



All Other Art: Darick Robertson



triggered by AIDS—"because she's a mutant-hybrid-clone, it affects her differently"—was discussed, but the writer and artist decided not to exploit the disease. "She's going to mutate, nonetheless; she's going to have blue skin, be much more savage, and become more of a reflection of herself. She'll be exiled from Atlantis—that'll be an interesting emotional change. Her eyes go black; and her relationship with Nova's going to develop."

"Everybody's going to get new costumes; they're all going through a spiritual rebirth. We're going to have a new look to signify that. Speedy will become a little more hip, grow up a little more," Robertson explains. "I've been lucky enough to write some of his stories and try to bring him in as a character that kids can identify with. I want him to become the grunge rocker of the Marvel Universe; and he's going to start wearing a long black overcoat

and his hair is going to get a little more greasy and stringy looking. He's actually going to get much more control over his powers."

"The most interesting thing is we're going to find out that Robby Baldwin doesn't have a human body anymore, his body will wash up on the shore of the East River. They're going to identify it through dental records as a three-year-old decomposed body of Robby Baldwin. That's really going to freak the Warriors out—Well, if that's Robby Baldwin, who are you? And Robby asks, 'Yeah, who am I?' That's one of the most interesting plot twists Fabie has come up with."

"I don't know what Night Thrasher will be going through—you've seen him go through some changes with the launch of his series—but Silhouette's going to get a sleek new look. She'll find herself more as a part of the team 'cause up till now, she hasn't

Art: Darick Robertson/Nike-Miller/Culins, George Cox

been sure she wants to be a superhero. That reflects on the book in that she doesn't seem to really have her place in the Warriors. So by the end of my Warriors run, all the Warriors will be completely changed. They'll all have new costumes, new appearances, different edges to their personalities."

"There's a big Sphinx storyline where we send all the Warriors back to very appropriate places in time. The Sphinx will choose to send Night Thrasher to the days of the plantations and slavery which will be really interesting. Here's Dwayne Turner, a guy who has been sheltered his whole life, he has never had the 'black' experience and now he's going to be sent back to the darkest time for the African-American culture."

"I want to send Firestar back to Salem and have her hunted down as a witch. The best one, I think, is going to be Nova who gets sent to the future

and finds out that his brother has been given the Xandarian powers as opposed to him. So, we have a whole new Nova and he looks completely different. I've redesigned a costume for him. He's Nova 00 and may be a recurring character. That whole storyline leads up to my end on Warriors. I'm planning on leaving at issue #50, not saying I'll never return but I'll be off doing my own projects for a while."

Not in contact with Malibu after his initial work for them, Robertson was invited into the Ultraverse by writer Steve Englehart who wanted the artist "to help create and design some characters. So, I did all the designs for all the characters in the two books Steve is writing; I did all the Strangers except for Atom Bob and Grenade. I thought up the name for Grenade, but Rick Hoberg came in and redesigned them. I did the designs for

"I felt I had an immediate click" with The Solution, Robertson says. Even when Hardcase joins in the fun.

Night Man and also helped create the background stuff on him.

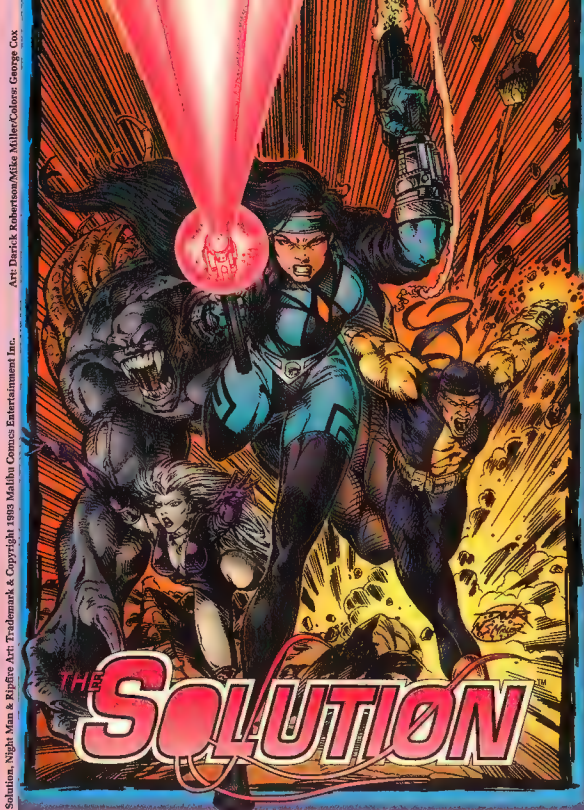
"I just tried to think of a contemporary look [for Night Man]. I've always had the DC look of heroes at heart so I always go for the tights. With Night Man, I wanted to do something really different. Everyone has the same kind of mask and headress and that kind of stuff. I thought the big, round, monocle-looking eye would be very different. I like the long hair, and the idea of a dark character with anything that can blow around in the wind and look really moody. I think it's really cool."

Robertson was taken off The Night Man before his completed issue #1 came out. He still wanted to work with Malibu, and when the offer came, he took over pencilling The Solution.

"I'm really excited about working on The Solution. It fell into my lap when Chris Wozinak left for Image. I wasn't too enthusiastic about it. I was really upset about things not working out on Night Man. But The Solution was a really terrific plot. Then getting into drawing the characters, I've had a great time. It's probably the best superhero book I've done. I may stick around to do more more [than five issues] depending on what happens."

"It took me a while to click on War—"How can one man change the world?" is the question Ripfire attempts to answer.





The Solution "is probably the best superhero book I've done," says artist Darick Robertson.

riors, but with *Solution*, I felt I had an immediate click. Jim Hudnall wrote a really terrific script, and there was enough room for me to put my own slant on what I thought the characters should be like. Like Dropkick, I see him as a very young, rebellious type, but he comes across as the team's Captain America/Boy Scout in appearance. He has a little more to him than that. There's an underlying anger that makes you respect him a lot.

"Tech" an Asian woman, who was an executive at a big corporation in Tokyo, and through white collar crime her company was embezzled away from her. She's the leader of *The Solution*, and I think that's really cool because there aren't enough strong female leader characters in comics. Then, there's Outrage, who's an alien. He's a combination of Lobo and Wolverine; he has the same hard-edged, cigar smokin', loner kind of at-

mosphere to him. He's pretty easy to draw and make his personality come through because he's very brooding. I see Shadowmage as very shy and unsure of herself, but being a very formidable hero as well; she has the ability to write rune signs on her hands and create powers through this memorization of rune art.

"Jim has been really great to work with," says Robertson. "To me, comics is a very complementary medium. A good artist can make a weak script good, it's much harder for a strong writer to make bad art good. People really must have good art in the books, otherwise there's nothing to draw readers into the story underneath."

Coven for Malibu's creator-owned Bravura line "is going to be my big thing next year," Robertson announces. He's working on that project with his friend Matt Weinhold

(see sidebar). "I'm also going to be writing my own thing—a book called *Ripfire* that I created.

"Ripfire," explains Robertson, "is a man who shares his mind with an alien. The alien ends up losing his entire race, the American government kills it off through prejudice and stupidity. Ripfire becomes a vigilante whose mission is to try and change the world. I'll be writing and drawing that for the *Ultraverse*." The character debuts in *Rune* #3's *Premiere* #1 flip.

Another Malibu project that has Robertson's attention as a writer is *Tripper*. "Tripper's a janitor, he's kind of a moron," Robertson says of his creation. "He's the kind of guy who'll tell you his point-of-view on things even though he hasn't really thought it out. He's always going to tell you what's wrong with the world although he has no solutions himself. He works in this big science lab. While cleaning up one day, he stumbles across this thing that looks like a remote control. He starts messing around with it, and suddenly, the doctor who's in the office late at

As with *Night Man*, Robertson notes, "I like the idea of a dark character with anything that can blow around in the wind and look really moody."



Art: Darick Robertson/Farner

night startles him. 'Hey don't mess with that.' 'Oh sorry. What is it?' The doctor, being so proud of his accomplishment, starts explaining how it's a prototype time machine; they haven't tested it yet, but he goes into all the details of how it works. Then, he realizes who he's speaking to and says, 'Well, just don't mess with anything. Finish cleaning and get out.'

"Tripper is obviously a handyman, who knows how to work things. So, he messes with it after the doctor leaves and accidentally sends himself back in time. The thing has a return button on it, though, so no matter where he sends himself, Tripper can hit that return

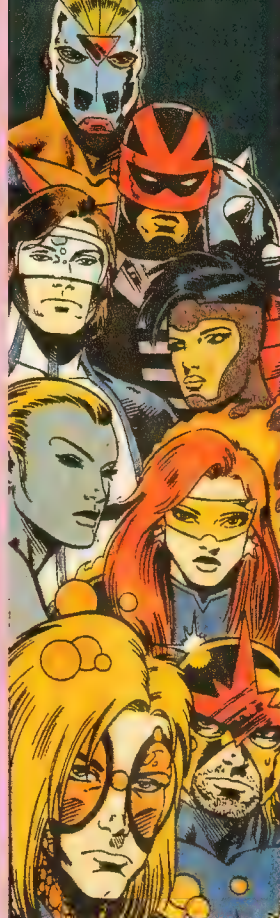
button and he'll come right back to the moment where he first programs the machine. Once he figures that all out, he says, 'Well, I've never done anything worth a damn my whole life, I've always wanted to make a difference and I've never been able to. Now I have this time machine, I'm going to go kick ass.' So, he grabs his shotgun, steals the time machine and says, 'Adolph Hitler, you're goin' down.' And that's the end of the first story.

"He's not a very deep thinker," Robertson laughs. "So, he's in Nazi Germany trying to get to Hitler with thousands of Nazis around him and he ends up hitting the return button and getting out of it. So, I can do a lot of multiple short story adventures with him. Although other people will probably draw it, I've already designed the character."

All of this work makes Robertson really busy. "I've been doing three books a month, or the equivalent. I'm amazed I haven't burned out yet; I'm still enjoying the work. Sometimes it's tough to keep 'on' but at the same time, I'm really like, I would rather be doing this than anything else. I figured a long time ago that if I was going to put 20 hours a day into anything, it might as well be something I have passion for, something I love; try and get better at this as opposed to getting better making pizza which was what I was doing before comics."

An early 1993 conversation with Robertson hinted at revealing Rogue's origin in *X-Men Unlimited*. Guess what? "It's definitely going to happen," he confirms. "We're going to go into Rogue's past. Fabian and I both have a lot of research to do on Rogue to make sure all the continuity flows together. Everybody will definitely come out of it with much more information on Rogue. We're going to give her a name and a past, and we're going to find out what her life was like before she came to have mutant powers; what made her the way she is, how much of her is her, how much is Carol Danvers, what her connection with Gambit is, how Gambit actually works into her past."

Robertson's affection for Rogue goes back years. "I've always loved Rogue; she has always been my favorite Marvel character. When I was in high school, the whole reason I wanted to get into comics was so I could be a part of Wolverine and Rogue. I wanted to write Wolverine and Rogue and work on the *X-Men* just so I could do Rogue's origin. So the fact that I'm getting to do Rogue's origin is a milestone for me. Fabe's going to let me co-write it. He has been really, really supportive of my writing career, encouraging me to become a writer as well as an artist. He actually believes in my writ-



The "Time and Time Again" storyline in *The New Warriors* puts all the Warriors in peculiar situations.

ing and coming from him, I take that as a huge compliment. I have a lot of respect for the man."

Notes Robertson, "I have always loved comics. When I was a little kid, they used to have Gold Key comics where I got my hair cut and I would read them, but I never really got into them. One day I went into this drug store after getting my hair cut and they had a 'Hey Kids, Comics!' rack. I found this really great issue of *The Flash* that had a cover that immediately grabbed my attention. For some reason, I was just fascinated with it. For the first time ever, I identified with the character and I saw the art come to life,



Quite a beginning: Robertson's first Marvel work was for *Wolverine* #54. He's credited as guest penciller.

because it was action-packed and moving. That just drew me into comics. I started drawing the images. I had always been interested in drawing, but never really thought about comics."

Robertson agrees that what is being done to some comics characters today is upsetting. Various heroes have been folded, spindled and mutilated, all in the pursuit of greater sales. Drastic changes take away from the character's appeal, and to someone who loves the characters as they are (were, in some cases) it can hurt. "Whether we like it or not, or whether anyone wants to see it in this broad range, these characters are our modern day versions of Perseus and Zeus; this is modern mythology, and that's why people get so into them. They're what we all aspire to be or wish we could do.

"Comics are really exploding right now, but I'm hoping we channel back. We had a real renaissance in the '80s; with *Watchmen* and *Dark Knight*, we saw the pinnacle of what comics could be. I like the dynamics and the energy behind all the new stuff, but I'm hoping we remember what this is about, that we have an opportunity to really create art here. We have the ultimate tools and we have a bigger audience than ever. I hope more creators will start striving more towards quality instead of the appeal of quantity. I think we can manage to get both."

It's really easy to draw guys hitting in every issue," notes the artist, "we've seen enough cosmic fistfights over the years that we don't need that many more. It's kind of

Matt Weinhold is in the comics field. Sort of. By night, you see, he's a stand-up comedian. Through only the fact he was wearing a Joker T-shirt, Weinhold met artist Darick Robertson. The two became friends, and are now co-creators.

"The book we've got coming out is *Coven*. It's Matt's conception," notes Robertson.

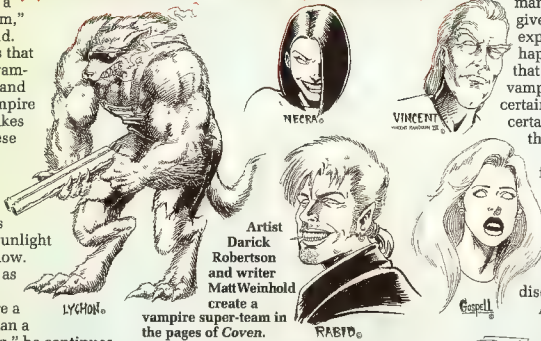
"Basically, it's a vampire superteam," explains Weinhold. "What happens is that there's a typical vampire-type slaying and suddenly, the vampire blacks out. He wakes up and he has these powers—he can morph and do all these other things. The only thing that inhibits him is sunlight. Sunlight doesn't kill him now."

"You find out, as issues go by, that vampirism is more a scientific thing than a supernatural thing," he continues. "The members of his group exhibit different aspects of the vampire power. The main vampire, Vincent Randolph the Third, is like the Dracula, Gothic-type figure. He has this little coven of vampires at home, and he shares his blood with them and they turn into super-vampires as well."

"There's a guy who has the ability to manipulate the wills of animals—mostly rodents—and they call him Rabad. He literally travels around on

an ocean of rats much in the way that Iceman travels around on his ice. He can fly by using vampire bats the same way. Gossell's ability is telekinesis. She used to be a Jehovah's Witness, so now she's the group's spiritual leader. You find out how each of them became a vampire."

A COVEN WITH FRIENDS



Artist Darick Robertson and writer Matt Weinhold create a vampire super-team in the pages of *Coven*.

She just knocked on the wrong door." Robertson laughs. "Isn't that great?"

"Necra can raise the dead and manipulate them as an army. She just sits there and they climb out of the ground and fight and do her bidding," the writer says. "She used to be a prostitute who was abused by her pimp. Now, she has a little hatred of men and she will raise only men, and on her off time, she'll make them abuse each other, doing Three Stooges kind of stuff to each other."

"Then, there's Lychon, the group's wolfman and muscle. He's like the Thing. And he's a redneck," states Weinhold. "They caught him during the Civil War [and made him a vampire]. He was a Confederate soldier, and now he's just this big Okie in overalls and carries a big shotgun."

"What's really nice about this is that it's an ongoing mystery." Weinhold says. "There are so many things that you're given hints to and are explained later. Like, what happened to this first guy that made him a super-vampire? Why is there only a certain type of blood or a certain type of person that they can suck blood from? 'I'm a big vampire fan,' Weinhold notes. 'I like the idea that the supernatural might be only something we don't understand, a scientific thing. People thought demons caused diseases back in the Dark Ages, now we know it's viruses. I want to look at this in the same way.'

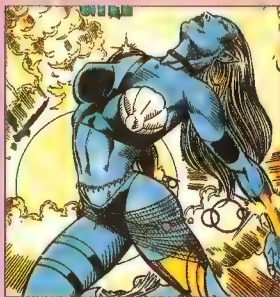
"Doesn't that sound like it'll be a lot of fun?" Robertson asks. "I'm excited about it. I'm doing the art, and to be working with Matt is really terrific."

Weinhold says about his partner, "I would tell him an idea that I picture in my mind and he knows exactly what I'm talking about. It comes out like it came from my brain to the page. It's a nice relationship."

—Maureen McTigue

hypocritical for me to say, 'cause I like drawing that stuff. I like it better, though, when there's a motivation behind the punching, when there's a real fury channeling that kind of fighting. The story should be as integral as the art."

"The ones I really like to read are comics like *Hate* and *Eightball*. Those guys are speaking from their inner voice. This is an artistic medium and everyone seems to want to fall into a generalization; everybody wants to kind of do the same thing that everybody else is doing—ride the coattails of popular trends. And I hate trends. True cutting edge is something that nobody has done before and the stuff that scares people a little bit—makes them nervous because they haven't seen anything like it before. I may be limited in only being able to draw fights too, but there's more to it than just that. But I'm aspiring to climb out of that and work beyond it."



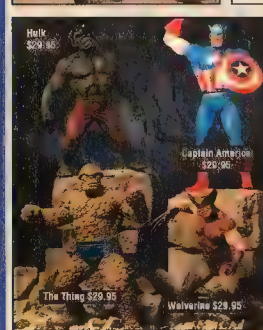
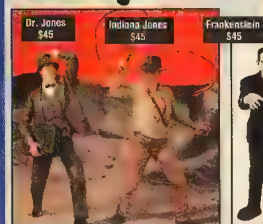
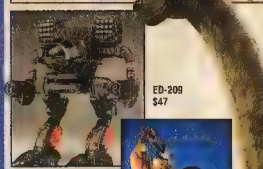
As a mutant-hybrid-clone, Namorita has undergone complicated changes. That's only the beginning.

"Most of the artists I know who are any good do it because that's what their calling is. So, any young and aspiring guy," Robertson offers, "be the

best artist you can be and then that will make it easier for you to break into comics. Study from books, study from magazines; draw from photos as opposed to from comic books, because that's where you speed up your education, and you'll also develop your own style that way. I hate all these popular copycat artists, they make me angry. It's great to have influences, but don't let those influences dominate you because you're always going to be the guy who looks like so-and-so; you'll never be yourself. Every artist should want to have his own voice and his own statement. I don't think there's any one artist that I look just like other than myself. That's my advice...I have a moral standard," he laughs.

"I want to be the next Woody Wood. I want to work myself into an early stroke and throw myself in front of a train when I can't draw anymore," Darick Robertson laughs, "but leave behind a brilliant legacy."

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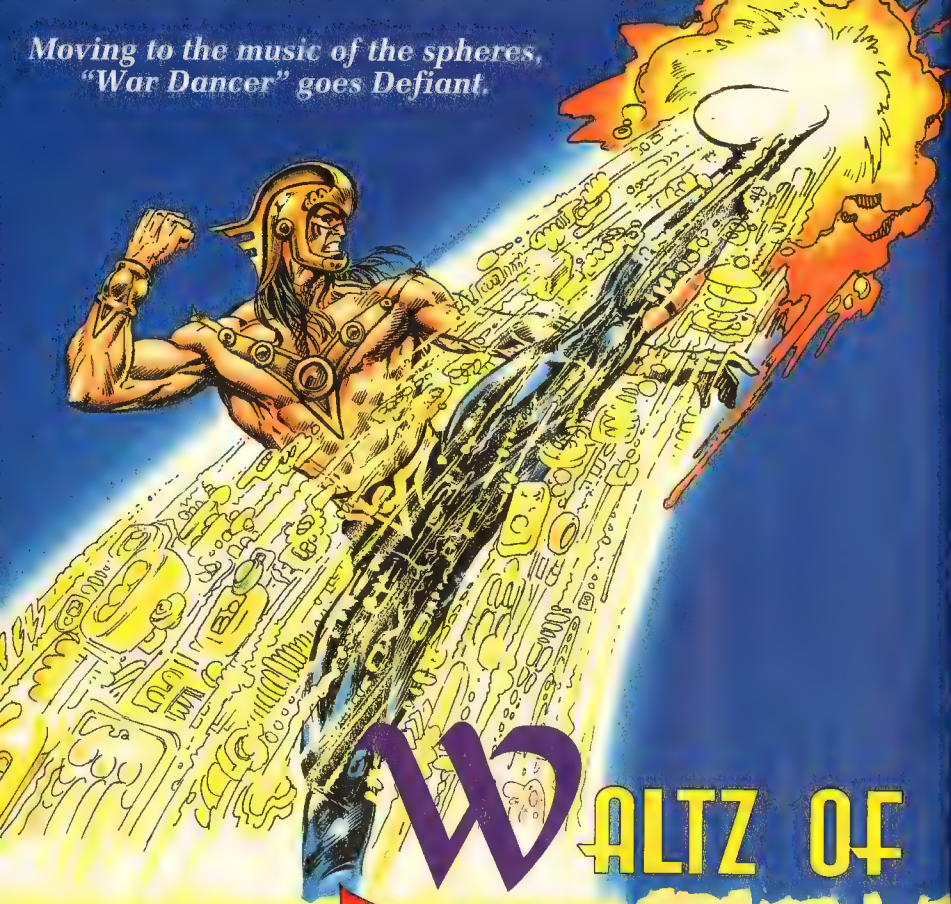
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Moving to the music of the spheres,
"War Dancer" goes Defiant.



WALTZ OF DESTRUCTION

By S.C. RINGGENBERG

Alan Weiss is one of the best-kept secrets in the comics industry," says Defiant's Jim Shooter, Weiss' collaborator on *War Dancer*, the company's newest title. "He hasn't done a series for any extended length of time, but whatever he has done has been great. The time is now right for him to do a series in which he can really show the world what he can do."

Weiss is a comics veteran who entered the field in the early '70s, alongside such friends and contemporaries as Bernie Wrightson, Jim Starlin, Michael Kaluta, Howard Chaykin and Frank Brunner. Weiss also happens to be one of the comics industry's most paradoxical figures, a talented artist and writer who has collaborated with

some of the best-known creators, yet who hasn't achieved the level of recognition that his dynamic, beautifully drawn pages might seem to merit. He has drawn such characters as Batman, Solomon Kane, the Avengers, Warlock, the Sub-Mariner, Captain America and even the heavy metal group KISS for a comic that at one

point was Marvel's bestselling title. Currently, Weiss is best known for his 1992 Elseworld entry, *The Blue, The Grey and the Bat*, a Batman Civil War/Western. His subject matter includes superheroes as well as Westerns, swashbuckling adventure, humor and even romance comics.

War Dancer, which Weiss describes

as "a knock-down, drag-out allegorical, mythological love story with apocalyptic overtones," stars a totally new character, created by Weiss and developed for the Defiant Universe by Weiss and Shooter. The character is so important to Defiant's continuity that Shooter calls him "the linchpin of the Defiant Universe." War Dancer can guest-star in any Defiant title, thanks to his transcendent power to cross time and space—not to mention panel borders—at will.

Shooter enlisted Weiss to work for Defiant for one simple, very powerful reason. "Alan is probably the most creative man I've ever met," Shooter declares. "He's the most original thinker in the business and is unfettered by all of the conventions that many other artists get hung up with." The two collaborated in the early '80s on several issues of *The Avengers* and an unpublished Sub-Mariner mini-series, while Shooter was Marvel's Editor-in-Chief. Shooter also greenlighted *Steelgrip Starkey*, Weiss' creator-owned Epic Comics mini-series. Two more Weiss creations—*Wonderwar*, a WWII fantasy graphic novel, and *Drastic Action Comics Featuring Scuff Ruffin, Universal Sidekick*, a superhero spoof—were to follow and may be revived at Defiant. So, can the return of *Steelgrip Starkey* as a Defiant title be far behind? "After all," Weiss chuckles, "Jim already bought it the first time."

Although they only worked together on a few small projects after Shooter's exit from Marvel, the two kept in touch. "Then," Weiss says, "we both turned up at the opening of Chuck Rozanski's Mile High Comics store last February in Denver. I asked him what he was doing next after Valiant, and he said he was starting up a new company. At that point, he had only two books planned, *Plasm* and *Dark Dominion*, and he had a little bit of artwork. We made plans to get together in New York City. Within two weeks, we met and Jim told me that the Defiant Universe was based on quantum physics and would deal with principles of uncertainty, nonlocality and the idea that the



Alan Weiss brings chaos (and order) into the Defiant Universe with War Dancer.

observer can affect the experiment/adventure. They were all very exciting concepts to spring a universe from." Expecting to be offered just a pencilling assignment, Weiss remembers asking Shooter, "What do you want me to do?" "I want you to help us build a universe," was Shooter's quick reply.

As part of his pitch to enlist Weiss, Shooter asked Weiss to reread *The Tao of Physics*, one of many texts Shooter had consulted while fashioning his Defiant Universe (CS #36). "By the time I reread the preface," Weiss notes, "I had the core concept for *War Dancer*. The key was an allusion to the Hindu war god Shiva, who's depicted in the eternal dance of life/death, creation/destruction. The dance metaphor for the continual re-creation of the universe has always resonated well within me.

"But this is not to say that War Dancer is a god, exactly," Weiss clarifies. "When he's dancing in quantum space, he's godlike because he's dancing to the music of the spheres. When he's in our space/time continuum, he's like the mythic figure of the man who forgets he's a god."

"War Dancer's powers make it possible for him to be potentially the most powerful character in the Defiant

Universe. There's also an unusual Hitchcockian element in him that takes the character into realms that make him different than all other superheroes. This element of suspense is going to affect all of the character's relationships."

His uniqueness stems directly from his creators' reliance on quantum physics. "War Dancer's powers, in essence, are that he can, by force of will and the war dance, be anywhere or anywhen, which gives him the potential of being the greatest martial artist in the universe. But that's certainly not all that he's about."

Both Weiss and Shooter assert that grounding their character's powers in quantum physics will *not* make *War Dancer* too dry and cerebral to be fun. Using these advanced, difficult-to-understand concepts "doesn't mean that we can't do some good old rip-roaring comic book stuff, either," Weiss is quick to add.

Along with War Dancer's unusual powers come unique problems. "The more time he spends at our speed of life, which is very slow and thick and heavy to him, the weaker he becomes. Living at our speed, he has to feel human emotions, which he hasn't had to do for 25,000 years, and they'll confuse his purpose and muddle his will—as they do ours."

War Dancer fits squarely into the Defiant continuity; his origin is also the origin of the planet Plasm. "He becomes War Dancer at the very moment that Plasm transforms. Plasm changes from a beautiful, benign world into a hostile, all-devouring entity, not unlike a big cancer cell. There's a specific incident that occurred on Plasm 25,000 years ago," Weiss says, "that was so monumental that it led to the cataclysmic situation that we have today on the planet Plasm."

In fact, War Dancer is a warrior, philosopher, scientist and prince named Ahrc Tsolmeq. Ahrc lives within a super-scientific empire called Quexval Kwa that's located on an Atlantis-like continent on Plasm. He gains his trans-dimensional, trans-spa-



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"There's an unusual Hitchcockian element in him that takes the character into realms that make him different than all other superheroes," Weiss notes.

Taking inspiration from Shiva, the Hindu god of war, War Dancer is also surrounded by Mayan and Aztec designs and a Southwestern Native American feel.

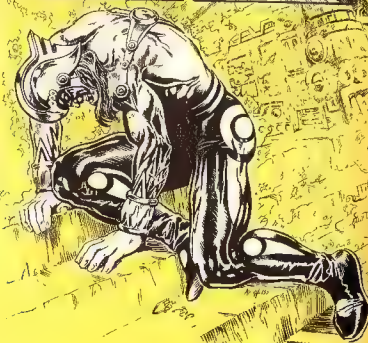
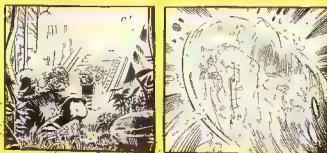
tial powers "as the result of a ritualistic experiment on Plasm that was interrupted by his rival scientist-magicians." The disruption of his experiment separates him from his lover and fellow scientist Zahnree. "So what we have here is not only a creator/destroyer character, we also have a 25,000-year-long love story of epic proportions."

And when War Dancer is catapulted into quantum space to dance his dance of creation/destruction, "He's mainly tweaking the universe," Weiss elaborates. "He's adjusting the energy here and there as need be, keeping the balance. But beyond that, what he experiences is high unto nirvanic bliss."

At the outset of the first issue of *War Dancer*, "Ahrh Tsolmec is called to the here and now, and to slow down to our three-dimensional speed, because of the emergency between the planet Plasm and Earth. They were divided by a nanosecond of time and space, but that split is coming together and causing big problems. This emergency even allows his interpenetration into our space, something that's not normally possible."

"War Dancer's mission, once he realizes it, is to restore the Plasm/Earth quantum balance. To do this, he'll use what power he can. He'll enlist whatever allies he can. Failing this, his only alternative is to perform the final, fatal war dance."

Arriving on Earth in the first issue, Ahrh is surprised that this is not his home. "He doesn't even want to be here," Weiss notes, "but he misses Plasm by mistake. And this is a guy who is never lost anywhere in the uni-



verse. He always knows where he is, so just the fact that he comes here when he's called tells him that there's something terribly, terribly wrong."

Yet, despite War Dancer's awesome destructive potential, he has an enemy in the Defiant Universe who may be succeed in eliminating him before he can perform the last apocalyptic war dance. "The series that follows right after *War Dancer* is *Charlemagne*, and his main purpose is to find War Dancer and neutralize him," Weiss reveals. "We have a good idea of how it's going to come out, but War Dancer could even surprise us."

In creating War Dancer's appearance, Weiss drew on influences ranging from *Flash Gordon* artist Alex Raymond's bravura style, to master fantasy painter Frank Frazetta, to Mayan and Aztec art. "When he dances," Weiss points out, "he leaves a trail of Mayan/Aztec glyphs. I just didn't want to do another American Indian character. Even though War Dancer sounds at first like he would be Southwestern Indian—and I was tempted because I love them—there were three or four other Indian characters around and I just wanted to take this in another direction and do something different."

"It's surprising how close our early character designs were to the current War Dancer look," Weiss comments. "His helmet and necklace are badges of rank within his culture. At first, the helmet was more of a metallic war bonnet, but it was too complex. And initially I drew body war paint in different designs. I adapted a kind of circle and arrowhead design for the final character design. I liked the Conan-esque idea of that sort of metallic shoulder piece that he wears like a necklace, with gems at all his chakra points. He wears war paint to simulate a mask, but has no secret identity, so it's not necessarily a disguise."

Although he and Shooter are officially co-writing the scripts, Shooter gives Weiss most of the credit for creating War Dancer. "It's primarily Alan's vision," Shooter admits, "and I think that what I've done is to show him ways that he can better fulfill his vision and fit it into what we're doing." At this point, the concepts and dialogue each collaborator contributes are evenly divided. After plotting the story together, Weiss does the pencils. After the pencils are done, each does a dialogue session on the script. "You should see how we do it, though," Weiss adds gleefully. "We talk for hours and hours. We get very excited. We act out the stories, including the choreography, right there in Jim's office. We 'war dance' all over his office. We have fun. And frankly, that's the way it ought to be, because these are



According to its creator, *War Dancer* is "a knock-down, drag-out allegorical, mythological love story with apocalyptic overtones."

'comical books' after all.

"That's the reason why I'm even taking on a regular title. Before Jim made his offer, I was mulling over projects at several different publishers. *War Dancer* seems to be right because of the timing and the creative latitude I have."

"The main reason that Jim and I are doing it together is because the Defiant Universe is *his* universe. And if this character's going to be the linchpin, I want us to have him fit in the best way possible. And so far, Jim and I are having as much fun as when we worked on *The Avengers*, if not more."

Another strong motivation for collaborating with Shooter is the fact that Defiant is a brand-new company. There's no complex history accumulated over decades. "Defiant," at this point," Weiss observes, "is very much like what it must have been like working at Marvel in the early '60s, when it was just a small company. Everything was being done for the first time. You didn't have to deal with 500 issues of continuity for every title. There's much less red tape. And there's very much a family, team feel to it."

Weiss will definitely pencil at least the first story arc of *War Dancer*. Afterwards, he may take over scripting while working on other projects.

Within the comics industry, particularly among artists, Weiss is noted as a meticulous craftsman with a very re-

alistic style. Weiss shares this realistically rendered dynamism with Neal Adams, with whom he worked during his early years. "Neal Adams was the closest to the style I wanted to do," Weiss recalls. "What I wanted to see in my style was the ultimate blend of realistic guys like Al Williamson, Frazetta and Gray Morrow, combined with Jack Kirby's exaggerated dynamism. That, to me, was the best of both worlds. People say I'm a realistic artist, but I'm not. My work is dynamic exaggeration, rendered realistically so I can express the character's human qualities."

During his career, Weiss has been more fortunate than most artists in being able to select his assignments, while dividing his time between advertising and at least one comics job a year. "I've been able to arrange my time, the time of my life, better than most people have the chance to and I don't regret that for one minute. I've enjoyed every comic book I've done."

"Nonstop monthly deadlines can be quite a grind, but the less deadline pressure, the more enjoyable it was. And I don't mean this to sound corny or anything," Alan Weiss notes, "but I tried to get as close as possible to the fine art concept within the realm of commercial art. I don't see this as some sort of race, like who can produce the most pages. I was always more interested in drawing the *best* pages. I may not have done as many stories as other artists, but I'm proud of them all." ☐

All Art: Alan Weiss/Culiers; Janet Jackson/Courtesy Defiant

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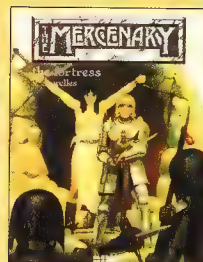
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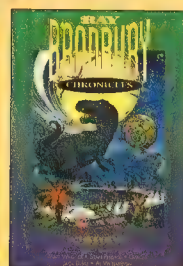
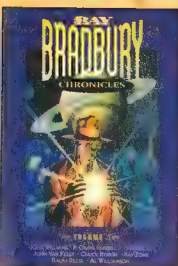
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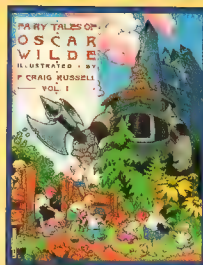
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TUROK REBORN

According to Tim Truman, the muscle-bound Indian in the first three issues of Valiant Comics' *Turok, Dinosaur Hunter* isn't Turok. No, this isn't another wild Valiant continuity tangle. Rather, call it a matter of interpretation—one might even say of principle.

"He worked reasonably well as an Indian character, but he wasn't the Turok I remember," says Truman, an artist/writer known for his powerful portrayals of Native Americans. "I guess it would be OK if they wanted to pass this off as a new character. I personally would have found that more

acceptable. I'm coming across as a typical Turok fan boy—I don't mean to, but I had an interest in the character."

The Turok Truman had an interest in held his ground *without* a gun against prehistoric beasts in the Lost Valley for nearly 30 years in the Western Publishing/Gold Key comic *Turok, Son of Stone*. When Valiant acquired the rights to such Western heroes as Magnus, Robot Fighter and Solar, Man of the Atom, Turok was one of the prime catches: a Native American hunter who brought along his own *Jurassic Park*-style supporting cast.

But something happened to Turok in the translation to Valiant's Unity storyline and eventually his own best-selling book. Turok, the teacher who loved the land and helped other tribes sort out their squabbles, turned into one mean fella. The kind of guy who would tell you where you could put your peace pipe. "He was grim," Truman says in his hickory-smoked West Virginia accent. "Grimrok."

Truman was actually offered first crack at *Turok, Dinosaur Hunter*, but was too busy doing a five-issue *Jonah*

Tim Truman takes the Dinosaur Hunter back to his roots.

By DARC Y SULLIVAN



BUT THE EAGLE STOPPED SOARING AND ALL I COULD SEE THROUGH HIS EYES WAS MY BACK.

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"The Turok I remember was a very friendly character," Truman says. "He had an essence of nobility."



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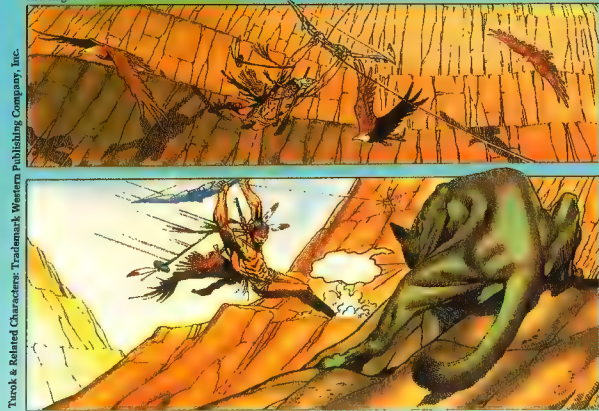
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Turok's adaptability led Tim Truman to deem the character a Kiowa Apache, as no tribe was ever noted in the original series.

Hex story for DC. By the time Truman came on board with issue #4, writer David Michelinie and artists Bart Sears and Bernard Chang had worked Turok into a gun-toting grunt. A panel dead center in *Turok* #2 even aped the *Rambo* poster—the Son of Stone had become the Son of Stallone.

Job one for writer Truman and artist Rags Morales: Get Turok to lighten up. "The Turok I remember was a very friendly character," Truman says. "He had an essence of nobility, but he still ran from the dinosaurs whenever he could. He really used his ingenuity, skills and intelligence, rather than just being macho."

The Turok transition wasn't hard to spot. In the first three issues of his own title, Turok engaged in a massacre of genetically-engineered biosauroids; he capped it off by waving a machine gun in each hand and finally sticking a bomb into one creature's skull. In #4, he didn't kill, stab, punch or shoot anything. About the most action he got was hugging his now-aged ex-pupil Andar.

Since then, Team Turok has been working under Truman's direction to bring a sense of humanity to the character—and a sense of history. Truman is a Native American buff and ardent researcher; besides comics work like *The Spider* (CS #19), *Hawkworld* (CS #8) and *Wilderness* (CS#12, about Simon Girty, an American "traitor" who sided with the British and Indians against the colonies), he has written a book profiling 24 frontiersmen and Indians of the eastern frontier, *Straight Up to See the Sky*. Truman and company have given Turok a tribe, a new pupil and even a smile or two—along with more than enough dinosaurs and villains to keep things

moving. As Morales says, "You have to understand the warrior behind the bullets."

For Truman, it was important to lend a touch of Native American veracity to the book, something that had only been done erratically before. Alberto Gioiotti, who drew many of the Gold Key Turok comics,

seemed to mix elements of the plains and Southwestern tribes in fashioning the dress of Turok and Andar, the two unlucky braves who stumbled into the dinosaur-stocked Lost Valley (called the Lost Land in Valiant stories).

"Gioiotti also drew the Dell series *Tonto*," Truman notes, "and showed a remarkable amount of research in depicting the tribes Tonto interacted with. I think a little bit of that carried over into Turok, although Turok was very stylized."

Not as stylized as the Valiant Turok, who in issue #1 faced death with the prayer, "Great spirit, take me into your lodge!" Um...great spirit? "That's a white invention," rebukes Truman. "To a Native American, when you say 'great spirit,' that's like saying 'ugh' or 'squaw.' It's a real yawner to them."

Truman, unable to find Turok's tribe identified in the Gold Key issues, decided to make his hero a Kiowa Apache. "The Kiowa tribe was originally a plains tribe," he explains. "It became a Southwest tribe in the 1700s, and intermingled with other tribes. I decided Turok and Andar were Kiowa Apache, based on the plains and Southwest influences."

Inspired by the Gold Key Turok, Truman drew the cover to *Turok Dinosaur Hunter* #9 with the original #61 in mind.



All Turok Art: Courtesy Valiant

Art: Tim Truman/Sam Glanzman/Colors, Bill Dunn



Truman feels a responsibility to take guns and glory away from teenagers, and so Andy returns Turok's "borrowed" piece.



one schooled not by the Kiowa "rabbit society" but by the considerably fiercer folks in the American Indian Movement. That group, Truman notes, "is to Native Americans what Black Power was to the African-Americans."

One key early moment in the Turok-Andy relationship came in #8, when Turok gently took back his pistol after Andy "borrowed" it. Turok's caution stood in stark contrast to his early Valiant issues, when he fired off more rounds than words. But then, Truman has a ways to go to make up for glamorizing guns in comics like *Grimjack* and *Scout*.

"When I was growing up, I would read these comics where Thor would get a building thrown on him," remembers Truman, who enjoyed recreational gun use growing up in West Virginia. "I would say, 'Hell, why doesn't he just shoot the Wrecker?' But that was then, and Truman has had some second thoughts about guns, violence and comics. In real life, he and his father accidentally killed a fawn's mother years ago, souring Tim on hunting. In comics, he watched the firearms he helped bring into vogue fall into, as they say, the wrong hands."

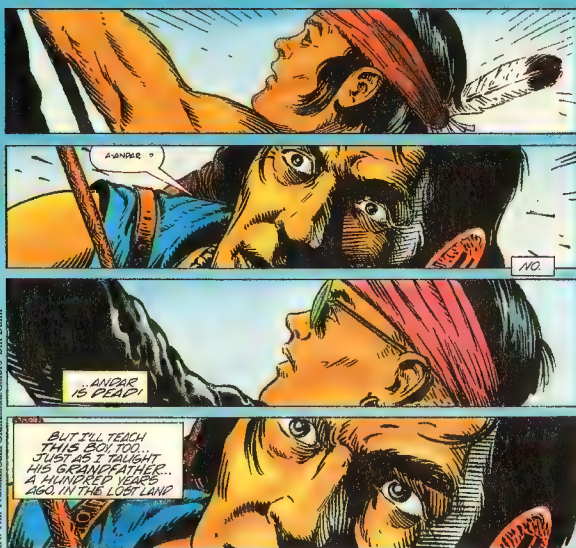
"Most comics creators have never fired a gun in their lives," he announces. "Ninety percent of them have never been in a fistfight. That's the dangerous aspect, 'cause they don't know that this stuff hurts. My son was real keen to get in a fight at school. I said, 'Ben, if you make that decision, it ain't gonna be fun, buddy.' He found out that was true."

"So, Turok taking Andy's gun away was sort of a commentary on that whole thing. I couldn't let Andy keep the gun—he's a teenager, and we have teenage shootings around here all the time."

"You have to understand the warriors behind the bullets," notes Truman's Turok collaborator, artist Rags Morales.



Art: Rags Morales



Andar had made the dinosaur hunter "a little more human," says Truman. Now, Andar's rather strong-willed grandson Andy takes his place.

The *Turok* turnover—two writers and three artists in the first four issues—has slowed but not ended with Truman and Morales' arrival. Issues #10-12 were written by Mike Baron, another Native American buff. Years ago, Baron and Truman brainstormed a character they called War Shaman—the title alone later appeared in Truman's *Scout* (CS #5).

Truman returns to write #13-15 and will serve as the book's "culture expert" in the future. He has already fielded questions from Tony Bedard, who is writing #16-18. Morales will draw nine issues or so a year, he says, "because that's about my pace." He and Truman are also slotted to handle

Turok #0, a summer '94 book that will explore Turok's background and his relationship with Andar. "His people gave him Andar as a pupil because Turok was such a grumpy SOB," Truman says. "He was the Son of Stone. His relationship with Andar made him a little more human."

But until then, there's plenty to keep *Turok, Dinosaur Hunter* from turning into *Turok & Andy's Campfire Bonding*. "I wanted to get away from fighting dinosaurs every issue," says Baron, who has taken Turok to Los Angeles in an effort to stop a rogue who trades in rare animal parts and keeps a bionosaur as a pet. "This guy sells ground-up tiger pizzle to supersti-

tious rich people who think it makes them more virile," says Baron. Pizzle is, in case you were wondering, about the last part of your body you might want mashed up into somebody else's Wheaties.

Turok emerges with his pizzle intact, and in #13 Truman will take the reins again, introducing a bionic buccaneer named Captain Red. "Rags just wanted to draw a pirate," shrugs Truman. Red teams up with two "reject bionosaurs," also created by the evil Mothergod who once employed Turok. The group's mascot is a human services droid from Magnus' era named OUB2.

This motley crew makes its way to the present day, naturally. If you've been wondering why all these time-wanderers keep turning up in North America circa right now—instead of ending up in, say, 18th-century France—you're not alone; Truman has too. "I've been trying to establish with [Valiant editor] Kevin VanHook a reason why these characters keep bumping into each other," he says.

"I came up with this system of physics, where the timelines are like a timestream, and the people traveling in time are in bubbles in the timestream. There happens to be a disruption in the wall of the stream, and when the bubbles pass near it, they're drawn in and end up in our modern day. The way I'm figuring it, people who've been through the breach are attracted to each other like magnets. I touch on this in #13-15, and I think Kevin's going to play with it in *Solar*."

If he has his way, Truman will bring back the Spider People, favorite characters of his from the old *Turok* books who reappeared in #7-9. "These primitive tribes, if thrown into the modern era, would be like an indigenous native culture," Truman says. "After the government rounds them up, what is it going to do with them? It's analogous to the way tribes were rounded up in the 1800s and early 1900s and reindocinated. I would come back to them, and show how the state and federal au-

thorities have messed them up."

For a guy who has studied the injustices visited on Native Americans by white society, Truman has introduced a number of sympathetic white supporting characters. These include cultural anthropologist Regan Howell and rascally scientist Darwin Challenger, who Truman says is "probably" related to Professor Challenger from Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Lost World*, the literary template for the original Turok.



Joining in the *Turok* fun is writer Mike Baron who "wanted to get away from fighting dinosaurs every issue."

"I don't like to play with totally good or totally evil characters," he says. "Adolph Hitler taught that there were totally evil people, and the Nazis were totally good. I can't believe that

white character," says Tim Truman. "That was very unusual in that period. He was a person who stood on his own two feet—it almost didn't matter what race he was."

For young readers, Turok's search for a way out of the Lost Valley was a quest of mythic proportions, rivaling Number Six's scramble to escape "the Village" on *The Prisoner*. No one could foresee the twists this odyssey would take in the '90s, beginning in *Magnus* #12. Poor Turok: He finally got out of the Lost Valley, but he never made it home.

—Darcy Sullivan



Chick and the Clan of the Spider showed up for issues #7-9 only to be carted away for "evaluation." Truman hopes to bring them back.

Nazi Superman ethic. It's relied on too much in comics. It's really weird to look at Nazi statuary and see how much it looks like the X-Men."

As that statement suggests, Tim Truman prefers heroes and stories with a more down-to-Earth bent, rather than cosmic slugathons involving idealized figures of Us and Them. As a kid, he says, his favorite comics were *Turok*, *Kona* (another Gold Key book) and *Sgt. Rock*—low-tech fare with a man-against-the-odds flavor.

This year, he'll be lending his own talents to some similar projects. If the right contracts exchange hands, Truman will draw *The Lone Ranger* for Topps from Joe Lansdale's scripts. "What makes a successful tough guy story is a lot of humor," says Truman. "These writers who graduated from high school and lived with their moms in an apartment, they miss that. A lot of tough guy stories today are just so darn grim and self-conscious. Joe's sto-

ries have this rip-roaring humor. Probably, if I wrote it," he adds, noting Tonto's presence, "I would make it very self-righteous."

Count on another *Jonah Hex* miniseries too, one that draws on a mixture of Old West history and silver-screen hokum. "I'm doing a singing cowboys story," Truman explains. "These guys are good old boys who went to lectures Oscar Wilde put on. [In 1882, the flamboyant aesthete and author gave a lecture tour in the U.S., charming everyone from sophisticates to miners.] So they're putting doilies on toilet seats and stuff like that. They decide to do art for art's sake, and many of them are musicians. Hex doesn't really like the notion of riding across the prairie with seven guys singing in harmony."

"Then, they meet this underground civilization. It's a tribute to those Gene Autry Western films, where when the cowboys aren't singing, they're dealing with an underground empire that just happens to be a couple of miles away." (continued on page 58)

Classic Turok

The idea of a lost valley, island or even continent still inhabited by prehistoric animals has given us *The Lost World*, *King Kong*, *The Valley of Gwangi* and countless other films, books and TV shows. In comics, the chief playground for this fantasy was *Turok, Son of Stone*.

Turok and his young charge, Andar, first stumbled into the Lost Valley back in a 1954 anthology, *Four Color* #596, published by Dell. They quickly got their own title, which ran until 1982; it was published by Western Publishing, and hit its peak in the 1960s under the

Gold Key imprint.

Several things made *Turok* special. Like other Gold Key titles, it had painted covers, which—with James Bama's *Doc Savage* covers and Frank Frazetta's work on Conan and Edgar Rice Burroughs paperbacks—featured some of the most evocative fantasy images around. During one of pop culture's periodic dinosaur crazes, *Turok* provided a steady supply of the creatures. (Turok and Andar called them "honkers" after the sound they made.)

The Lost Valley could always conjure up a good twist—a race of giants, an alcove of deadly plants, a swarm of

pterodactyls that could pick a Tyrannosaurus rex's bones bare in seconds. In fact, this must have been the biggest "valley" in New Mexico, harboring as it did several dozen Native American tribes, at least one river and enough dinosaurs for a Ray Harryhausen retrospective. The authors themselves explained that the area was formed by "vast limestone caverns whose roofs fell in, long ago," creating a hothouse climate "heated by smoldering volcanic fires."

If the science was shaky, the characterization of Turok was rock-solid. "Turok wasn't a good man Friday to a

A half-century later,
Frank Coghlan Jr.
still knows what
happens
when he says,
"Shazam!"



It's heroic magic when Billy Batson (Frank Coghlan Jr.) says the name of ancient wizard Shazam (Nigel De Bruiler).



The premier superhero serial, *Adventures of Captain Marvel*, was "a damn fine product," says Coghlan.

It was one of those career decisions which either immortalizes an actor or permanently pigeonholes him (depending on the actor's outlook). In 1940, Frank Coghlan Jr. took the role of Billy Batson in Republic's 12-episode *Adventures of Captain Marvel*, where the mystical cry "Shazam!" transformed him into the two-fisted flying superhero (played by Tom Tyler). In the more than 50 years since, his participation in this superlative serial (widely considered the best ever) has become Coghlan's major claim to fame, eclipsing the big-studio films in which the former child actor appeared opposite some of the screen's greatest stars. But Coghlan looks back on his "superhero" days with far more pride than prejudice, and he recently wrote glowingly about the experience in his 1993 autobiography *They Still Call Me Junior*.

The son of a railroad clerk/pro boxer, Coghlan was born in Connecticut and soon after moved with his parents to California, where all three did extra work in silent pictures. Freckle-faced Coghlan was soon one of the era's most popular child actors, but with the advent of sound (and the onslaught of adolescence), he was reduced to smaller parts. After starring (opposite Louise Currie and Billy Benedict) in *Captain Marvel*, Coghlan

Power of Billy Batson

By TOM WEAVER

was a naval aviator in World War II. He later headed the Navy Motion Picture Cooperation Program (and other similar programs), acting as liaison between the Navy and the Hollywood studios. When his 23-year active duty stint ended in 1965, he returned to acting in movies and on TV (where he had a supporting role in the pilot of the Captain Marvel-esque sitcom *Mr. Terrific*). He wrote his autobiography (available from McFarland, Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640) "because my kids just kept bugging me to do it," does the occasional TV commercial, and is a popular figure at movie conventions where, to his ongoing amazement, fans still line up to meet *Captain Marvel's* alter-ego.

Photo: Courtesy Frank Coghlan Jr.



Coghlan recently reminisced about his life in a 1993 autobiography, *They Still Call Me Junior*.

COMICS SCENE: Why were you not able to hang onto stardom, once you got a little older and talkies came in?

FRANK COGHLAN: If you recall, until Mickey Rooney, as Andy Hardy, made adolescents popular [in the late '30s], all kids dropped out of the business. We got pimples and buck teeth, lost our freckles, our voices got high and didn't record well—there were all kinds of reasons the studios wanted to get rid of you [laughs]. Adolescence was the kiss of death for kid actors. At least, it was until some smart apples made Rooney into Andy Hardy. But before Andy Hardy, Henry Aldrich and [movie series] like that, you got to be 13 and you were out of work!

CS: How unhappy were you when your career started to slump, and you began playing bit parts?

COGHLAN: It didn't break my heart. Maybe I didn't have starring roles anymore but, golly, I've made 125 movies, so I was still workin'! Maybe I was only delivering a telegram in a movie [laughs], but I still got around!

CS: How did you become involved in *Adventures of Captain Marvel*?

COGHLAN: I was working on *Men of Boys Town* [1941] at MGM, and during my last week on it, my agent called to ask if I could get a few hours off—he wanted me to go for an interview over at Republic. They were about to make a serial called *Captain Marvel*, and they were considering me for Billy Batson. One of the assistant directors

at MGM told me I wouldn't be needed for the next few hours, so I drove to Republic. (By the way, I had no idea who *Captain Marvel* or Billy Batson were.) At Republic, I was interviewed in the office of a producer named Hiram Brown and I met Bill Witney and Jack English, who were going to be directing *Captain Marvel*. After the interview, on the way back to MGM, I stopped by one of the big drugstores and bought a copy of *Whiz Comics*. I read it with interest back at MGM on the set, and then also at home. I thought to myself, "Hey, I do kind of look like that kid." And then it was a couple of days later that I was told I had the job.

CS: What made Republic think of you? **COGHLAN:** I think because I looked like Billy Batson—I was the right age, I was available, and I didn't demand a fortune in money (which Republic wouldn't have spent anyway!). [Writer/serial authority] William C. Cline wrote that my casting was just a stroke of genius, as far as looking like the kid. Other writers have said that I was too old, and they objected to my voice, but what the heck, I'm sure the kid Billy

Batson had a high voice, too! It was just considered good casting.

CS: How quickly was *Captain Marvel* shot?

COGHLAN: It was made in December [1940] and January [41], and we had a 28-day shooting schedule. There were many exterior scenes, and if there was inclement weather on a given day, there was always an interior cover set where we could go and shoot a different scene instead. Unfortunately, we just had more bad weather than we could cover, and we went four days over schedule. But 32 days, that's not bad for 12 episodes!

CS: Did you feel that you were being rushed?

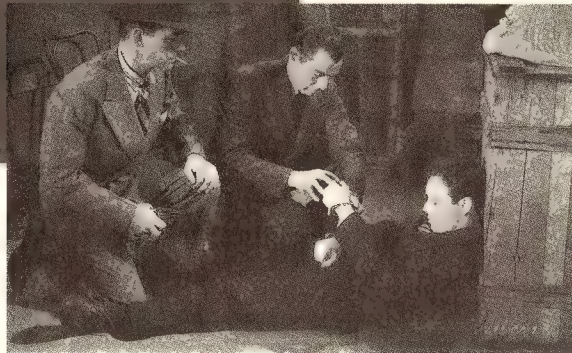
COGHLAN: Toward the end, when we were falling behind, we were working both directors, and we would hop from one to the other. We were really frantic toward the end—a couple of days over is a big, big blow to the budget. Louis Germonprez, the production manager, was sensational—what a great organizational mind he had. In his office, he had the largest breakdown board I had ever seen; the thing ran the whole length of the room! Across the top it was divided into the 28 days of production. Lou knew where we were going to be every minute of every day! But when the weather got bad and we couldn't cover shots, then he was in trouble—that's why we had to work two shifts. He was an organizational genius, and he doesn't even get screen credit—isn't that amazing?

CS: As you were making *Captain Marvel*, what was the general attitude about it? That it was "for kids only"?

COGHLAN: Well, serials were aimed mainly at the kids. When I was a kid, 10 or 12, I went to the serials faithfully, but in later years I didn't. And, after all, it did spring from a comic book. So, I think that we had to regard it [as a kids' picture]. But ours had so much class to it—Republic put a lot of marvelous stock shots into it, to give it quality, and we had a damn fine product when we got through with it.

CS: How did working at a small studio like Republic compare to working for one of the majors?

COGHLAN: In the big studios, you could relax a little bit more, take a



Captain Marvel's grueling 32-day schedule left Coghlan a bit winded. Bad guys Kenne Duncan and Carleton Young take advantage.

longer lunch. At Republic, they cracked the whip every minute.

CS: What can you remember about Tom Tyler (Captain Marvel)?

COGHLAN: Well, my good friend Tom and I were never in a scene together—we could *not* be, because he was my alter-ego. But we were on the *set* together all the time, because we would have to shift roles. I knew Tom from years before: When he was making Westerns with Frankie Darro in the 1920s, his director was Robert de Lacy, whose wife Leona was my mother's best friend. My mom used to have the de Lacy's over for dinner several times a year, and they would bring this big, handsome, bashful bachelor with 'em. That was Tom Tyler—he was a guest at our house a number of times over those years in the '20s. Then, suddenly, here I was on the set of

Captain Marvel with him in 1940-41. But I hadn't seen much of him in the interim. And after *Captain Marvel*, I was in the Navy, so I didn't see much of him in *later* years either. The poor guy had a sad demise—he had this terrible auto accident (I *hear*) that caused him a lot of facial damage, and then arthritis crippled him up before he died. He was a very pleasant, business-like man—he just sat there all day long, patiently. A really nice person.

CS: What about Billy Benedict (STARLOG #199)? Louise Currie (CS #21)?

COGHLAN: Prior to *Captain Marvel*, I had never really known Bill, but today we're best friends. Louise was lovely on the set, very nice—business-like, too, but attractive and friendly. We never became socially friendly because she had different interests—she's now

More than a half-century after playing radio commentator Billy Batson, "*Captain Marvel* is still getting me invited to film festivals," Coghlan says.

an interior decorator married to a wealthy importer, living in this mansion in Beverly Hills. They're a very nice couple. We've been to two film festivals together. Two years ago, I was able to *delight* Leonard Maltin: When Leonard put on Cinecon 24 at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel in L.A., I put together a panel of Bill Whitney, Louise Currie, Bill Benedict and me—the first time ever that all four of us had been on a panel. We filled that auditorium, and Leonard just *drooled*! **CS:** Any memories of *Marvel's* supporting players?

COGHLAN: In support, we had people like Jack Mulhall, who had once been a *star*; John Davidson [*not* the singer], an *excellent* actor; Bryant Washburn. Nigel De Brulier, who was Shazam, played Cardinal Richelieu opposite Douglas Fairbanks twice. And Carleton Young—when I was later head of the Navy office in Hollywood, I was very pleasantly surprised and pleased to see that he was an Army colonel, a full *bird colonel*. I got billing over him [in *Captain Marvel*], but *here* he outranked me! Harry Worth played one of the archaeologists. Well, a year or so after we did *Captain Marvel*, I was in Bullock's Wilshire, the classiest department store at the time, and I saw Harry selling neckties in the haberdashery. And he was so *embarrassed*! He was workin', what's wrong with that? But he was so embarrassed for me to see him there—I guess he considered it degrading. There's nothing wrong with selling neckties! And they were *expensive* neckties [laughs]!

CS: How were *Captain Marvel's* flying scenes done?

COGHLAN: That was the work of the Lydecker brothers [Howard and Theodore], the special FX men at Republic. They had a seven-foot papier-mâché dummy of Captain Marvel—it was beautifully proportioned. It was seven feet from head to toe, then the arms were extended out farther. They stretched out a wire until there was tremendous tension, and then they put the dummy on it—and the effect was beautiful. I saw them slide it 200 yards down Mulholland Drive, and that wire didn't sag an inch. The Lydeckers were so clever! In one episode, Captain Marvel leaps from the street up to the sixth-floor roof of the Biltmore Hotel, and they used that dummy there again. Actually, that time they slid the dummy down backwards, and then reversed the film. It makes sense when you talk about it, but who would have *thought* of it? Well, the Lydeckers did [laughs]!

CS: What real-life injuries do you re-

Amidst Scorpion suspects, Coghlan gauges reactions as they inspect a new clue.

call, amidst *Captain Marvel's* action?

COGHLAN: The main stuntman was Dave Sharpe, and he was so beautifully coordinated that he was rarely injured. He was a smaller guy than Tom Tyler was, but their builds were enough alike that he could get away with doubling for Tyler. Dave did some death-defying stunts—he used a small trampoline to help him make those unbelievable leaps, and he would be caught by a bunch of guys with a small fireman's net. I did see him fall short on one of his trampoline jumps, and I know he hit his coccyx bone on the rim of that fireman's net. He never let us know it, but he had to have hurt himself—he fell right on it with his tailbone. And that back flip he did in Chapter 1! Two natives were coming at him and he did a back flip, catching each native under the chin with his foot as he went over, knocking them out. I thought that was a work of art!

Speaking of Dave, I got \$175 a week [on *Captain Marvel*]; Bill Benedict got \$150; Tom Tyler got \$250; and Dave Sharpe got \$250. To think of it, a stuntman of his quality, on a *flat* salary...! Today, he would make more than that on a single stunt! I went to see Dave at the Motion Picture Country Home toward the end of his life, when he had Lou Gehrig's disease. He couldn't even talk, he would just flash his eyes to show you that he recognized you.

CS: Over the course of making *Captain Marvel*, were you ever asked to do something that you would have preferred that a stuntman do?

COGHLAN: Not that I recall. And I wasn't doubled very often, either. William Whitney was at a festival where he was asked that question, and he told the person, "No, Frankie was a pretty handy guy." And I was—I was 23 years old, and in great physical condition from running, playing football, things like that. But if there was anything that was *really* going to hurt me, of course they had people stand in for me. The *funny* situation I remember was when I was swimming with Louise Currie's double on the final day. We were out at Lake Malibu and I was supposedly saving her life, towing her to shore after she had been knocked out in the shipwreck. I had a tweed suit on, and when it got wet, that thing weighed about 50 pounds! Then with one arm around the girl, I didn't have much to keep me afloat! After a couple of tries, I asked Bill Whitney if I could at least take off my trousers and my shoes—and I did!

Also, in Chapter 1, there was a scene where the natives are attacking the archaeologists' compound, and set it afire—that was shot up near the



His resemblance to comicdom's Billy Batson helped win Coghlan the role in *Captain Marvel* opposite Louise Currie.

Iverson Ranch. And once the fire got going, we realized that we were surrounded by barrels of burning oil. The wind shifted on us, and we felt the heat. I don't think we were in *tremendous* danger but, hey, you never can tell—it was hot, and we *could* have gotten french-fried! Then, there were the scenes where I said "Shazam!" and turned into Captain Marvel. Every time we did that, they ignited flash powder, which was in a trough in front of me. And if the wind was unkind, I would get the powder flash in my face and lose some eyebrows!

I was in a serial called *The Last of the Mohicans* [1932] where I did object to a few of the things that this jerk Wyndham Gittens asked me to do. Gittens was a writer of *many* serials—he evidently was a very clever writer—but he was a pompous ass. He was

asked to take over directing one day, after [director] B. Reeves "Breezy" Eason was fired for coming in with a hangover. Gittens just didn't know how to direct. He was one of those guys that got in there and *he* acted it, and then wanted you to do what *he* did. That's how I got even with him. For one of the cliffhanger endings, I was supposed to fall backwards off a cliff; there were going to be two crew members on a ledge below who would use a net to catch me. This jerk Gittens picked a very high, steep cliff with only a very narrow ledge below, and I knew that there was no way these guys could catch me—my weight would throw them off-balance and we would all fall 100 feet to our deaths. So, I said to him, "OK, Mr. Gittens, you show me how you want me to make this fall and I'll do it the same way you do." He



Coghan has played hundreds of screen and TV roles, but "if people want to recognize me for [Captain Marvel], be my guest."

looked down the cliff and immediately decided to shoot the scene in a safer place!

CS: Do you remember where you saw *Captain Marvel* for the first time?

COGHAN: The first time I saw any part of *Adventures of Captain Marvel* was when I had just gotten married. I was a brand-new ensign at Pensacola, Florida, and my little bride had never seen me in a movie. *Captain Marvel* was playing in Pensacola at a segregated theater. We went down there and walked up to the ticket office, where a little black girl was working. I said, "I would like to come in and see this movie. I worked in it." And she said,

"Oh, no, sir, we can't let you in, this is a black theater." I asked, "Is the manager here?" He came out; he was a white man, and he recognized me immediately. So, they let us in, but they made us sit in the very back row!

CS: Reverse discrimination?

COGHAN: No, no—it was the fact that they didn't want the kids who were there to see me. They thought there would be a riot! And when the lights came up and the kids started walking out, there was a lot of, "Ooh, there's Captain Marvel!" And when I went through my flight training, most of the stewards in the Navy—the kitchen help—were black. And, boy,

Only after 12 slambang episodes did Coghlan finally meet face-to-hood with the sinister Scorpion.

when I went through that chow line, there it was again—"Ooh, there's Captain Marvel!" And, wham, I would get another pork chop and a bigger scoop of potatoes—*really!* I was well recognized through my flight training!

CS: Would you have done more serials for Republic if they had asked you?

COGHAN: Oh, of course. I did *The Great Circus Mystery* [1925] as a kid; then *The Last of the Mohicans, Scouts to the Rescue* [1938] with Jackie Cooper and *Captain Marvel*. And I do believe that if I hadn't gone away [into the Navy], Republic would have had me back for others.

CS: So you enjoyed the experience of *Captain Marvel*.

COGHAN: Bill Benedict and I had a ball. Toward the production's end, he and I decided to buy a present for everyone in the crew and for the few actors who were still working. We put 40 bucks together—that was big dough in 1941—and we went down to the five-and-dime store on Hollywood Boulevard and bought 40 gag presents on a budget of a dollar a gift. For instance, we gave Tom Tyler a jockstrap—that wasn't disrespectful, but with his tight Captain Marvel outfit, we thought it would *help* [laughs]. And we gave Davy Sharpe this little toy man with a parachute, and he had a ball with that—he went all over the set, blowing that thing up into the air and letting it come down. That's how Bill and I felt, we liked this crew *so much*. And I think it was reciprocated.

CS: Why do the lives of so many kid actors go sour?

COGHAN: I don't think I can truthfully answer that. I've read the books of Baby Peggy, Jackie Cooper, Mickey Rooney and Dickie Moore, and they all bemoan that they *never* had a childhood. I *loved* my childhood! Golly, going to sea with William Boyd for six weeks [*The Yankee Clipper*, 1927], being on the field with the New York Yankees [*Slide, Kelly, Slide*, 1927]—man, I have *great* memories! Also, I had a marvelous mother, and I think she kept my feet on the ground. I never made the big money that many of the guys did, like [Jackie] Coogan and Baby Peggy, but I *enjoyed* life. So I just don't know. So many [former] kid actors are actually *bitter* now, like Jackie Searl—he won't answer his mail or talk to people. I can't understand why they're so bitter. It made them wealthy, recognized and famous.

CS: And you think a big part of the reason you kept your head screwed on straight was your mother's influence.

COGHAN: Oh, I think so—she was a wonderful woman. I was *not* permitted

(continued on page 64)

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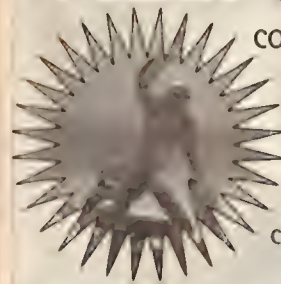
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Lantern

(continued from page 29)

unfortunate or not, is that if a book doesn't sell, it's *not* going to be printed. There's isn't a company out there in the business of charity, and *Green Lantern* obviously wasn't pulling in the numbers DC wanted."

Marz does, however, acknowledge that the transition might not be smooth for every *Green Lantern* reader. "I feel bad for some of the older fans who are extremely attached to Hal, but I hope they would give what we're doing a shot. Keep in mind that the very nature of the *Green Lantern* Corps was one of change. Sooner or later, the ring is always handed off to somebody else. I'm sure back in 1959 there were a great many people upset about Alan Scott passing the mantle to Hal Jordan."

"Anytime you change anything, there's a certain segment of the audience that's going to be up in arms about it. We hope that we're doing things well enough and keeping enough respect for the character that the audience will come to realize that we're not doing this as a quick-fix or just for a big splash of publicity."

"This is the new direction we want to stick with," Ron Marz concludes, "to make *Green Lantern* once again one of the major stars of the DC Universe."



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Turok

(continued from page 51)

Truman's heart is closest to a book he's doing for Malibu's Rock-it line of rock music biographies. It seems musical legend Carlos Santana asked for Truman personally. "Carlos was in a comic book store one day," Truman recounts, "and somebody said, 'Did you know there's a comic book character with your name?'" That was *Scout's* Emanuel Santana, who in fact was named for the guitar player. "Carlos really responded to it," says Truman. "He's fond of comics anyway; he learned to read English by reading *Spider-Man* when he came up from Tijuana."

The respect is mutual. "Carlos was one of my big influences, man, musically and creatively, perhaps even spiritually," says the axo-playing Truman. The book will be drawn, painted and written by Truman, based on his interviews with Santana; Tom Yeates will also pencil a few pages, being another big fan of 1960s San Francisco music.

"You have this kid who at age 13 was playing strip joints in Tijuana with a rock band," says Truman, describing the book, "and in his 40s, he's playing stadiums in Russia and Japan. Carlos and I wanted to show what a poor kid can do if you apply yourself, and make use of your inspirations." Truman hopes this approach, a departure from the gutter-gossip style writers have tried to foist on Santana in the past, will land him the job of collaborator on Santana's biography.

What about more Valiant books? Do any of the company's futuristic heroes appeal to him? "Not really," Truman admits. "If they could bring back *Kona* or *Mighty Samson*, that might tickle my fancy."

So after his busy 1994, a more reasonable bet would be that Truman will bring out a new *Scout* storyline. With Emanuel Santana dead, his two sons grow up at opposite poles of the Native American spectrum. "The youngest kid, who narrated *Scout: War Shaman*, becomes the personification of the true, unadulterated Apache, which is what his father wanted to be," says Truman. "The other boy lives in white civilization under a religious man, and so is very indoctrinated. The story is what happens when they meet in the middle."

More Native American stories, on top of Turok and Tonto? Doesn't Tim Truman worry about getting typecast as "that Indian guy"? Not at all, says the artist—in fact, he sounds a bit pleased with the idea. As he says, "We need more Indian guys." **CS**

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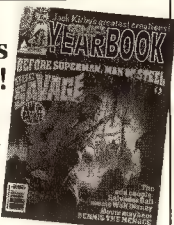
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War Machine

(continued from page 19)

Both writers hope that readers will view the character as more than just a "poor man's Iron Man."

"Rhodey has been around for a long time, and readers have seen him grow and develop over the years," Kaminski says. "He isn't somebody coming out of the blue."

"I'm starting to see signs that he's really popular already," Benson declares. "When people find out that he's getting his own series, the reaction is generally quite positive. People like War Machine mostly because of who he is. Jim Rhodes is a very appealing character. He has a very down-to-Earth, pragmatic attitude, and he's not crammed full of the usual Marvel heroes' neuroses."

"The similarities are only chrome deep," says Kaminski, who also writes Iron Man.

Neither writer is particularly concerned over one potentially touchy subject: Rhodes' ethnicity. "It's something we're both sensitive to, in that neither of us is African-American and neither of us know what it's like to grow up in America under the circumstances they face, but we feel that Jim Rhodes is a strong human being first and foremost," Benson says. "If he were white, Asian, a woman—Rhodes is still an excellent character and I hope we keep writing up to the standards he deserves. We know we're going to have to tread carefully. It would be kind of presumptuous of us to write a book on being black in America when we aren't; what do we know about it? But we have lots of colleagues in the business that we can and do turn to for feedback."

Kaminski says, "I call up James Fry [his collaborator on *Slapstick*] and ask him when I have doubts about how a given thing might be interpreted. He usually tells me, 'Calm down and get back to work!' It's a strange situation to be in, but all we can do is tell stories about this man as straightforwardly and honestly as possible."

Both writers confess to being thrilled with their artist, Gecko. A backup when their original penciller went with another title, they say that Gecko (a newcomer to comics) has done dynamite work on *War Machine*. "He's just plain terrific," Benson says. "He has a very clean style and a terrific storytelling eye. Gabe just gets better with every issue."

"He's a miracle," Kaminski adds. "Originally, Barry Kitson was going to do the book. We were all pretty disappointed when he chose to accept another offer. About a week later, I was

walking around the Great Eastern Convention in New York, wondering where on Earth we were going to get an artist, when I almost literally ran into Gabe, who was showing samples around. I took one look at them, handed him Nel Yomtov's phone number and wouldn't leave him alone until he promised to call Nel first thing Monday morning. I still think Kitson's work is great, but I can't imagine any body but Gabe doing *War Machine*."

The current trend in comics, featuring huge guys sheathed in metal, totting around larger-than-portable weapons, actually proved to be a help in getting *War Machine* off the ground. Still, Kaminski warns that readers can be fooled by appearances.

"The success of those types of characters helped get *War Machine* through the pitch sessions we went through," Kaminski admits, "but we're offering much more with this character. There's really a lot going on."

"Readers don't like guys like the Punisher because of their weapons—readers like them because they make a difference. For years, heroes were insulated from the real world; the crimes they fought weren't things a kid might read about in the newspapers. It seemed kind of silly and trivial next to the problems in the real world. And the heroes don't defeat evil, they just slow it down, because they're following these ridiculous codes that always trip them up," Kaminski observes.

"Batman has no reason not to put a stake through the Joker's heart; after all, the Joker escapes from Arkham, Batman catches him and puts him in Arkham. Then, the Joker escapes again and murders 300 people. And Batman catches him again—and puts him away again. Nothing really changes, and Batman hasn't accomplished anything. Readers like heroes like Punisher and Wolverine because, in some ways, they're more pragmatic."

"In *War Machine*, we can play with readers' expectations, especially the readers who've been reading *Iron Man* all these years and expect *War Machine* to be a clone," Scott Benson says. "We might try to force Rhodey down the Tony Stark path, but he won't let us—he's just too much his own man for that."

"It's very interesting," Len Kaminski muses. "In *Iron Man*, the mail was pretty evenly divided while Stark was dying. Half of it said, 'Great! Keep Rhodey in the armor and let Stark die!' The rest said, 'I hate you for killing Stark!' Some took the bold approach and said, 'Bring back Stark as Iron Man, cause he is the true Iron Man, and have Rhodey keep a suit and become a totally new hero.' Which is what we've done. See? The visionary readers get their wish." CS

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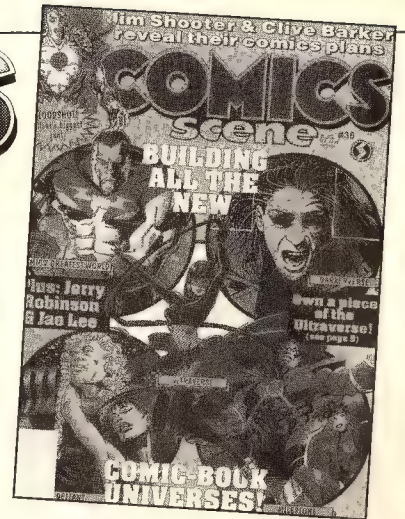
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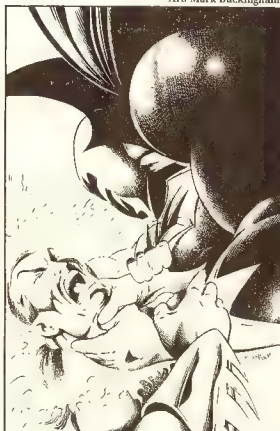
Strange

(continued from page 14)

bless him for doing it—that I should keep my focus, not try to do so many different stories within each story. I live with these characters and think about them all the time, and there are so many things to do with them. So, I try to take [editor] Evan Skolnick's advice and focus on one thing at a time."

Characters from all over the Marvel Universe enter into Quinn's plans for *Dr. Strange*. "I wanted to play with some Marvel

Art Mark Buckingham



Quinn notes, "Anyone in the Marvel Universe who's associated with magic is going to be affected by Salome and Strange."

characters," the writer says. "Bobbie Chase introduced me to Evan, who asked me, 'What would you do with *Doctor Strange*?' That book was a childhood favorite of mine, as well as the *Tomb of Dracula* and *Morbis* books. I had a great afternoon coming up with weird ideas, and faxed them off to him and left it at that, thinking, 'Well, that was fun, but I don't think they'll ever use me.' Instead, they called my bluff and brought me in and gave me a debut right in the middle of a huge crossover and really let me do almost everything I asked to do.

"It's one of those 'be careful what you ask for' situations. When somebody calls your bluff, you want to make it really good. So, I've been trying to be as provocative, mysterious and fun as I can, and do it the way Marvel asked me to do it. And that's don't trash the character, don't just kill someone off. Use the character, but put them in new circumstances, make

them work for now. And that's what I'm trying to do."

Quinn says, "I have a lot of sympathy for someone who has taken on all the responsibility that Stephen Strange has, to be our last line of defense against everything that's unnamable, unmentionable, unknowable and unseeable. There was a great storyline when I was a kid about how the whole world died and Dr. Strange was the only one who knew that they were just re-created. Dr. Strange has to spend a few sleepless nights thinking about the big questions that most of us don't most of the time. We are more content to say, 'When are we going to eat?' And he is thinking about, 'What happens when everything breaks down? What are the creatures we can't see? What are they doing? Is this life just a dream?' all those kinds of questions. I have a lot of sympathy for that. I spent a lot of sleepless nights myself.

"I got into a discussion with Clive Barker on a horror in comics panel. We were just sitting there saying, 'Why are we always on these horror in comics panels? I mean, what do we really write about?' Our takes are as different as our personalities, but both of us in our writing—and he's someone that I like to read, that's why I use him as an example—are always looking at metaphysics on the cheap, if you know what I mean. It's so ponderous and pretentious to get out and try to do a 'Is there a God?' kind of story. But if you make it a horror story, or a fantastic story, or a superhero story, you can play with all those mysteries. And no one would accuse you of being a 'foolosopher.' That's a big part of it for me. I can do stories where you're not always sure where you're standing.

"In the 'Strangers Among Us' series—a four-part series within a series that starts in issue #64—we finally get to go into the new Sanctum Sanctorum of Dr. Strange, which is going to be a place unlike the old mansion, which got blown up in issue #60. In the new Sanctum Sanctorum, we really don't know where we stand anymore. It's no longer so user-friendly. It no longer looks like a house. It looks like what it is, a place of magic. Some rooms are totally oriented differently, and in other rooms you become like an X-ray of yourself because it's measured on a different frequency. And in other rooms, sound vibrations are kept at a vibration that disintegrates everything. It becomes a very dangerous and disturbing place. That's his home. And that's where we're going to go see him at home in this kind of Renaissance of himself. He goes down into himself, down deep into his feelings because he has been really beaten up," says David Quinn. "And a new Dr. Strange is going to come out of that."

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Coghlan

(continued from page 56)

to go to professional schools, I went to public schools, I played sports, and I think that had a lot to do with it. Many of these kids who went to the professional schools kind of buttered up each others' egos [laughs].

CS: By "professional schools," you mean the studio schoolhouses?

COGHLAN: No, we all had to do that while we were working. But there was a school here in Hollywood called Mrs. Lawler's Professional School, and all of the kids, Rooney, Judy Garland and most of 'em, went there. It was three hours a day, it was a private school, and I guess you almost had to be in the movies to be admitted to it. But that was like livin' in the studio all day long! I got away from it, and I think that was good.

CS: After all the major pictures in which you've had good roles, is the fact that *Captain Marvel* is your claim to fame a bitter pill?

COGHLAN: Oh, hell, no—why should I be bitter? I'm not that kind of a guy. Look, if people want to recognize me for that film, be my guest. Also, I did have a tiny, tiny role in *Cone With the Wind* (1939), and at festivals, there are people that drool over me because I was in that picture.

CS: Let's put it this way: Years from now, only one of your movies still exists. Should it be *Captain Marvel*, or something else?

COGHLAN: Well, I would think it should be *Captain Marvel*. But then, I was in other movies like *The Yankee Clipper* with Bill Boyd, a fabulous seagoing movie. And then the next one that Bill and I did together, *The Last Frontier* (1927)—if that's ever found, I think it will compare very favorably with *The Covered Wagon*. (And we "discovered" Monument Valley. I think, long before John Ford did.) But, shucks, if people want to remember me for *Captain Marvel*, that's fine. (Just to be remembered is fine!) I mean, it has been 52 years, and *Captain Marvel* is still getting me invited to film festivals. So it's a recognized fact: Superman and *Captain Marvel*, they were the best!

Kirk Alyn and I were guests at a film festival in Atlanta, along with little Johnny Duncan, who played Robin [in *Batman and Robin*, 1949], and Frankie Thomas, who played *Tom Corbett, Space Cadet* and Tim Tyler [in *Tim Tyler's Luck*, 1937]. At the big banquet, I walked over behind Kirk and I said, "You know, I think Billy Batson was a much sharper guy than Clark Kent. And he didn't need a phone booth to change clothes in!" It brought down the house. So, I just said "Shazam!" and sat down! 

CRITIC'S CHOICE



One movie reviewer is
really getting animated.



By BOB MILLER

Jay Sherman is a movie critic with a problem: He has fallen in love with an actress whose film he has to review, and his comments will determine the course of their relationship. Will he compromise his integrity with his need to be loved?

It's a constant struggle for the star of *The Critic*, a new ABC animated prime time series from the producers of *The Simpsons*.

"Jon Lovitz [STARLOG #176] stars as an acerbic New York film critic who has his own TV show like *Siskel & Ebert*," says Mike Reiss, who with Al Jean and James L. Brooks, serves as executive producer. "The series focuses on his career and we'll get to parody a lot of films. The rest of the show is about his life.

"It'll have the same pace and, we hope, the same wit as *The Simpsons*. It's different, too; it has been carved out of areas that *Simpsons* doesn't really touch on. *The Simpsons* is very suburban and sort of an imaginary town and this is set in New York. It's mostly upper-middle-class people. He's Jewish and the adopted child of very wealthy, WASPy parents. He's a divorced father, an older man dating. He's certainly much brighter than Homer Simpson."

The Critic is the latest collaboration between Reiss and Jean, whose partnership has lasted since their college years at Harvard and Harvard Lamppoon through the *National Lampoon*, HBO's *Not Necessarily the News*, *The Tonight Show* with Johnny Carson, *ALF*, *Sledge Hammer!* and *It's Gary Shandling's Show* (for which they won three ACE Awards). They worked on *The Simpsons* from its beginning, writing a handful of episodes ("Moaning Lisa," "Lisa's Pony") and eventually becoming executive producers.

But, with *The Simpsons* remaining one of the top shows on the air, why would Jean and Reiss give it up for a new series?

"We kind of fell into it," Jean chuckles. "We had a deal with Jim Brooks to do both *The Simpsons* and other shows. It was a good move. *The Simpsons* is such a voracious devourer of material where you're doing one or one-and-a-half stories per episode. We didn't have much left to do there. Every childhood incident, every anecdote I possibly had to tell with those characters has been used up. And it really has been a break and a relief to write for different characters with different voices."

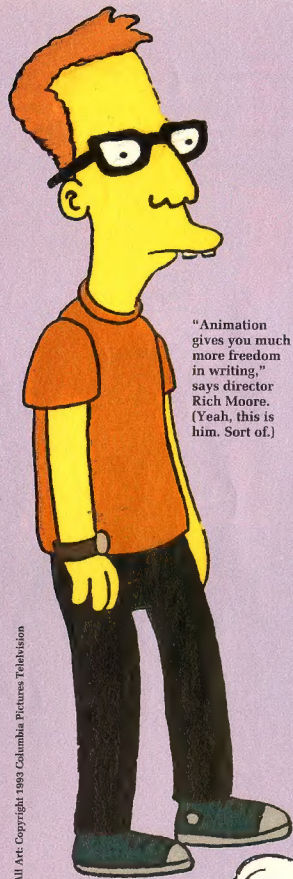
Reiss concurs: "Everyone who worked on *The Simpsons* loved the show and was very proud of the work, but the second they could get out, they headed for the hills. There was almost a complete turnover of staff at the season's end."

During *The Critic*'s conception, Brooks suggested Lovitz be the character, though his availability wasn't certain.

"It was a strange thing when we wrote the pilot, never knowing we could get Jon," Reiss says. "It was originally going to be a live-action show. The man has a booming film career. He just didn't have time for it. Rather than finding another Jon Lovitz, we thought it would be smart to make it animated and get his talents that way. Also, it opened the show wide open so we could do much more."

"Animation gives more freedom in writing," adds director Rich Moore. "They can write for more characters and more diverse locations than in live action, and the show involves several film parodies of movies that would be expensive and difficult to pull off in live action. Animation lends itself more to parodies."





"Animation gives you much more freedom in writing," says director Rich Moore. (Yeah, this is him. Sort of.)

With Lovitz signed to do the series, the producers still found it tough to work around his schedule. "He has been incredibly busy," Jean says. "He has done *City Slickers II* and *North* with Rob Reiner, so we got him in between. When we do get Jon in a four-or-five-hour session, he ad-libs and makes us laugh all the time, and he also gets a chance to do some singing on the show. People, I hope, will be surprised by what a beautiful singing voice he has.

"There's a certain persona he has that, when we were doing the pilot, it was really great to write to. You could hear it in your head. He just has this personality where he has this incredible self-confidence based on nothing."

However, Lovitz *didn't* want his animated persona to resemble his real-life appearance. Why? "He was afraid he would be like Mr. Magoo," Jean chuckles, "where people would go to see his movies, and they would hear the voice and think *only* of the character."

So, the Critic was designed to be an amalgam of different people, someone who looked smart but sympathetic, homely but cute. David Silverman, creative supervisor/director from *The Simpsons*, designed the title character with input from the producers.

The world of *The Critic* is populated by an extensive cast. Maurice LeMarche voices Australian actor Jeremy Hawke—a cross between Mel Gibson and Paul Hogan—who is Jay Sherman's closest friend. They frequently visit a trendy Manhattan night spot run by Middle Eastern entrepreneur Vlada (Nick Jameson).

Jay's family includes his father Franklin (Gerrit Graham) and mother Eleanor (Judith Ivey), who merely tolerate him; his 11-year-old son Marty

(Christine Cavanaugh) and his 16-year-old sister Margo (Nancy Cartwright, the voice of Bart Simpson), the only ones who appreciate him; and his ex-wife Ardeh (Brenda Vaccaro), who hates him. Luckily for Jay, she doesn't appear in every episode.

At work, Jay must contend with his makeup lady, Doris (Doris Grau) and his Ted Turner-like boss, Duke Phillips (Charles Napier), who's always willing to humiliate the Critic for the sake of higher ratings.

As for guest stars, "They've been trickling in," according to Reiss. In the first season, the Critic will encounter his competitors, Gene Shalit and Rex Reed. Other celebrities include Rod Steiger, Rod McKuen and Steve Allen.

"We do a show where Pulitzer Prize winner Jimmy Breslin hosts that award show," Jean says. "In another episode, they want Jay's show to be more popular with kids, so they do a ventriloquist act with Jay sitting on Kareem Abdul-Jabbar's lap, and he's humiliated by it."

Other first-season storylines:

"Marty's First Date"—Jay's son Marty goes on his first date, and the date ends them up in Cuba.

"Dial 'M' for Mother"—Jay and his mother Eleanor appear together on a Geraldo Rivera special about celebrities and their mothers.

"Miserable"—Jay falls in love with an obsessive Kathy Bates-type girl.

The supporting cast—and the show's overall look—was designed by Silverman, Everett Peck (*Duckman* for Klasky-Csupo), art director David Cutler (a former Disney artist who designed many characters for *The Nightmare Before Christmas*) and Rich Moore.

Moore describes himself as "the David Silverman of this show." As supervising director, he ensures the visual integrity and animation style is

consistent. Moore will also direct several episodes, as he did for *The Simpsons* in its first four seasons.

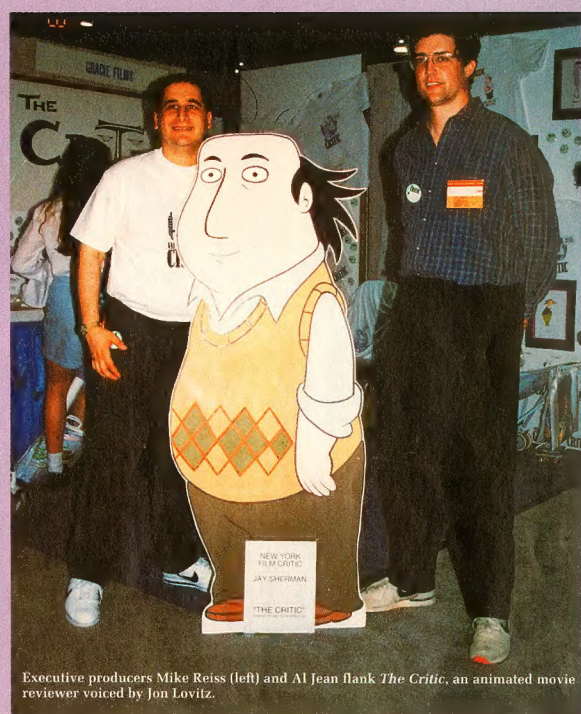
Most TV cartoon series have failed in prime time, the exceptions being *The Flintstones*, *The Simpsons*, *The Ren & Stimpy Show* and the specials featuring *Garfield* and *Peanuts*. Recent attempts to introduce "adult-relatable" cartoons—*Capitol Critters*, *Fish Police* and *Family Dog*—have met with disaster. What chance does *The Critic* really have in succeeding?

"Number one, the writing is excellent," Moore says. "For situation comedy TV animation, the writing *has* to be very good, and I just don't think the writing for those other shows was.

"And number two, well-timed animation isn't something that just happens. It takes a lot of work; it takes very good people who know what they're doing. All the directors here are very professional. They're not just animators; they are good filmmakers. They know how to tell a story, and they know how to keep an audience's interest. They know when to play a moment and when to pull back."

"The three animated shows that failed were about animated animals all running around," Reiss points out. "That's where an adult will say, 'I'm just not interested.'"

"I don't like to pick on other people's work," Jean says, "but here I go. When I read the pilot for *Fish Police*, I thought, 'Do people think they're getting *The Simpsons* here?' They're not. *The Simpsons* has a 13-person writing team that came from either *David Letterman* or *It's Gary Shandling's Show*—like us, people who had done a lot of quality writing, working non-stop to make these scripts very polished and in-

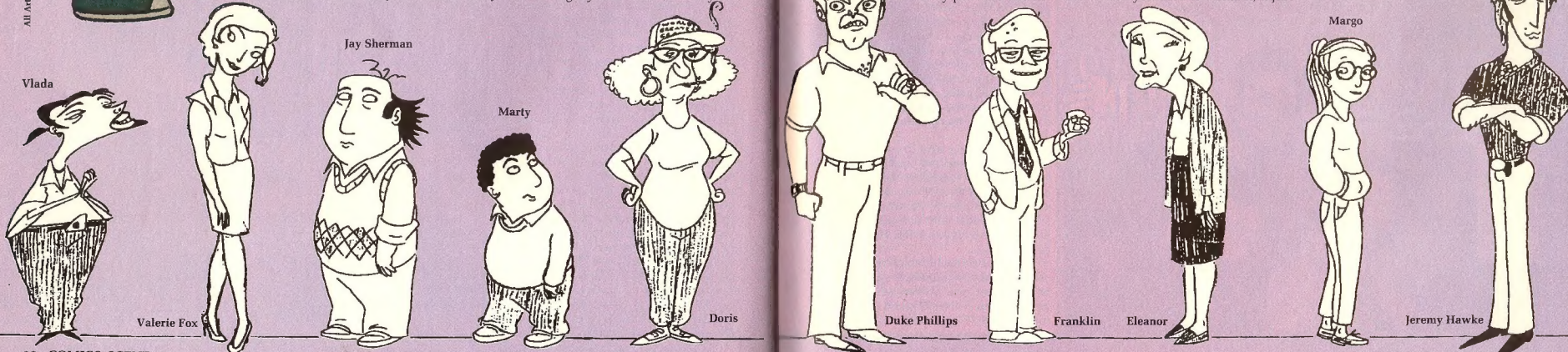


Executive producers Mike Reiss (left) and Al Jean flank *The Critic*, an animated movie reviewer voiced by Jon Lovitz.

telligent and making the characters very sympathetic.

"*Fish Police* was just a bunch of puns about fish, where 'I charge things with my credit *cod*,' and things like that. When you tried to watch it, it just

wasn't like *The Simpsons* at all. The only connection it had was being a cartoon. *The Simpsons* would be closer in sensibilities to *Seinfeld*."



"The interesting thing is, when Disney has broken out over the past five years with these blockbuster animated movies, they're about *people*," Reiss says. "Their leads are *human beings*. It's just a big thing that skews it more towards adults, and the kids are still going to see it."

"The key with animation is not worrying about kids, but mostly, getting the adults to think that there's something for them," Jean says. "I really don't think that those shows that failed did that."

"Mind you, I always hate articles where I read people in an interview saying, 'This is why ours is a hit,'" he chuckles, "so if this show is a bomb, everything I say is wrong."

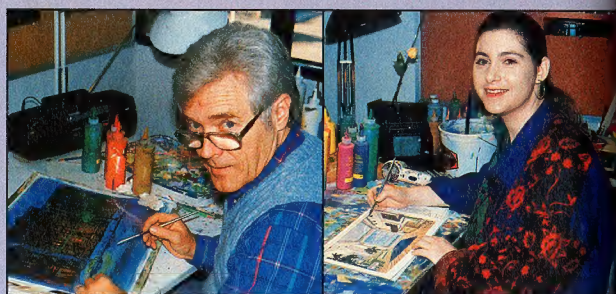
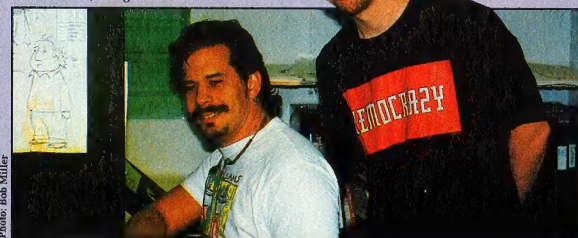
While *The Critic's* approach to humor may emulate *The Simpsons*, the show's style is different. "The whole look is fuller; the backgrounds are more painterly. They're not the flat planes of colors that *The Simpsons* is known for," Moore says. "It's more painterly backgrounds inspired by *New Yorker* magazine covers from the late '50s and early '60s."

"On *The Simpsons*, we deliberately took an approach to make the backgrounds kind of flat, kind of comic strip-y. Not too interesting to draw the eye," Reiss says. "For *The Critic*, we thought we would go the other way for a lush, painted background. Since it's set in New York, we can make a lot of use of beautiful artistic renderings in the New York locales."

"Our characters also have five fingers, unlike *The Simpsons*, who have four. That's a radical development," Jean laughs.

According to Moore, working on the show is "a huge collaboration. That's what makes it work well. 'It's good that it isn't just one writer writing all the scripts. It's great that you have people to sound things off. There are several other directors to throw ideas against. It worked well on *The Simpsons* and it's working great here."

Art director David Cutler (left) and Moore (right), along with David Silverman and Everett Peck, designed the show's look.



Dan Watson and Bari Greenberg provide detailed painted backgrounds for the series.

It's the only way that we can survive this," he says good-naturedly.

"When those other new animated shows were coming out, the trades would say, 'Family Dog: Dennis Klein was going to write all 13 episodes.' The same with *Capitol Critters*: 'Nat Mauldin is going to write the first six.' And it's like—No!"

"We had 13 people on *The Simpsons* working on every show, doing the writing," Jean says.

"This is the same on our staff for *The Critic*," says Reiss. "Al and I don't have an ego about that. We want lots of people involved."

Besides Jon Vitti (CS #17), the only other writer from *The Simpsons*, other *Critic* contributors have worked on *Seinfeld*, *Murphy Brown* and *The Larry Sanders Show*.

For *The Critic*, Moore had to bring in an animation crew comparable to the one working on *The Simpsons*. Many came from Disney, the *Family Dog* series, and "from all over."

Moore's approach to directing is "more in the way of a live-action director, who can take a script and turn it into something visual, but also emotional. I've learned a lot on *The Simpsons*, and I'm bringing that to this new show as my starting point, and

from there, these characters will dictate which way the acting will go.

"Of course, Jay Sherman is *not* going to act like Homer Simpson. Characters are different. There are things about them that make them who they are, so Jay Sherman is going to have a different way of acting than Homer. But the same good timing will be there."

The *Critic* is produced by Brooks' Gracie Films in association with Columbia Pictures TV, located on the Sony/Columbia Pictures lot in Culver City. While the Gracie producers oversee the writing and recording, the show is directed, storyboarded and designed at Film Roman, several miles away in North Hollywood. Film Roman also performs the same chores for *The Simpsons*.

"We try and write as cinematically as we can," says Reiss. "But the anima-

tors do have a lot of latitude. We'll send them a sound and audio track, about 18-and-a-half minutes long, and they'll return with 22 minutes of animation, so somewhere in there they'll get to stretch and add and amplify. It's always great to see how they enhance it and make it funnier."

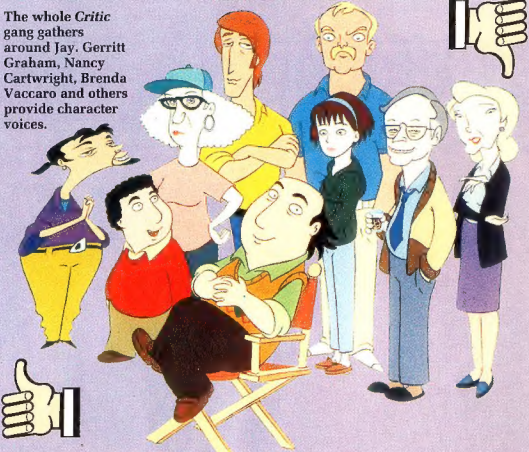
Listening to the dialogue tracks, the Film Roman artists draw the characters' expressions to match the vocal performances. They send storyboards and model sheets to Gracie, where the producers provide extensive notes and approve the designs.

"After a couple of months," says Jean, "they deliver an animatic [rough animation test], which we treat as if it's a run-through on a live-action show. We'll watch the rough print and give notes all the way through. We also do a rewrite with the writers at that point. Sometimes we make substantial changes. We add new scenes that weren't there before. Maybe up to 50 lines of new dialogue."

Following revisions, Film Roman ships the storyboards, dialogue tracks, exposure sheets, key layouts and key backgrounds to a subcontractor in Korea (Rough Draft) which takes the materials, animates the story and puts it on film. Three months later, the color print is sent back to the States.

"Then, we have a limited capacity to change that or do three or four retakes," Jean explains. "We can't do too much because it's really pricey at that point. We can change lines if one doesn't work. We also add music and sound FX. Our composer, Alf Clausen, worked for us on *The Simpsons*; he also did *Moonlighting*.

The whole *Critic* gang gathers around Jay, Gerritt Graham, Nancy Cartwright, Brenda Vaccaro and others provide character voices.



"The editing process can be difficult. People don't realize how much editing is really required and how much work the editors really do, because you edit the show three times: the audio track, fixing it up after the animatic, and then the whole color editing. It's a huge, enormous process."

Reiss adds, "The other thing that people don't know exactly about doing an animated show is how *relentless* it is. Each episode takes six months. It's eight months to produce 22 half-hour episodes, and then another eight months of post-production. That adds up to 16 months' work you have to do in a year. It never stops."

According to Reiss, "Most sitcoms or a regular live-action show, you're on for nine months and you get three months to recharge. But here, we're just going and going and going."

"It's easier this year because we're only doing 13 *Critics*," Al Jean says. "On *The Simpsons*, we do 22 to 24. If the show is a hit, though, it's like a treadmill with no off-switch. It's like the end of *The Jetsons* where George keeps going and going."

Mike Reiss has a simple solution for viewers who think they won't have a chance to see *The Critic*: "Just leave your TV set on ABC running non-stop. You can't miss it."

Moore's Choice ★★★

Director Rich Moore—who cites his influences as Warner Bros. and MGM cartoons—had trained at Cal Arts in Valencia, California from 1984 to 1987. During his sophomore year, he worked on Brad Bird's original *Family Dog* (for *Amazing Stories*) as an assistant animator. After graduation, he worked for Ralph Bakshi and John Kricfalusi on *Mighty Mouse: The New Adventures*.

"I was writing with Jim Reardon, Tom Minton, Andrew Stanton and Nate Campher. Together, we wrote 13 episodes of *Mighty Mouse*, and then once everything was written, I moved on to doing character designs with John, Jeff Pigeon and Carol Holladay," Moore recalls.

The writer continued on the second season of *Mighty Mouse*, then worked with Bill and Sue Kroyer (with whom he had done *Family Dog*) on an animated short, "Technological Threat,"



Rich Moore, busy timing an episode, left the success of *The Simpsons* to work on *The Critic* because "I knew it would be a good show."

about a Tex Avery-ish wolf whose job is threatened by computer-generated replacements. Kroyer, Moore and computer animator Brian Jennings wrote the story; Moore and Greg Vanzo (later to be overseas supervisor for *The Critic*) helped animate it.

Afterward, Moore worked briefly on Kricfalusi's short-lived *Beany & Cecil*, then color-keyed Bakshi's *Tattletown* special for Nickelodeon.

Then came *The Simpsons*. The

characters had already appeared in numerous shorts on the *Tracey Ullman Show*. Moore came on board when the Fox Network wanted a 30-minute *Simpsons*.

"I came on first doing storyboards. Then, there was a director's position available, and they promoted me. So, it was Wes Archer, David Silverman, Brad Bird, Milt Gray and myself directing that first season."

"The first one I did was 'The Tell-Tale Head,' about Bart hacking sawing off the head of a statue of the town founder," Moore recalls. "That happened to be Mike Reiss and Al Jean's first script for *The Simpsons*. They didn't come on full time, I believe, until the second season, because they were still working on *It's Gary Shandling's Show*."

During his four-year tenure, Moore directed 16 episodes, the most of any *Simpsons* director. Among them: "Simpson and Delilah," where Homer Simpson grew hair and was promoted to executive status; "Homer vs. Lisa

and the Eighth Commandment," which won an Emmy for Best Animated Program that season; "Lisa's Substitute," starring Dustin Hoffman as the substitute teacher; "Stark Raving Dad," where Homer meets a mental patient who thinks he's Michael Jackson; "Flaming Moe's"; "The Itchy and Scratchy Movie"; and "Marge vs. the Monorail," starring Leonard Nimoy as himself.

"Cape Fear," with Sideshow Bob, turned out to be the last episode for Moore and Alan Smart (now a director on *The Critic*).

For Rich Moore, "it was very difficult to leave *The Simpsons*, because it's just as funny as ever. I miss those characters a lot. But I just felt, well, it has been four years and it's an honor to be presented with this position [on *The Critic*] and I decided to do it. I have lots of respect and admiration for Mike Reiss and Al Jean. Since they're in charge, I knew it would be a good show. So, I couldn't go wrong."

—Bob Miller

COMICS REPORTER

COMICS screen

All of these upcoming projects are live-action unless specified. Those boxed are new or updated since last listing. Not everything listed will ultimately ever be made. S: script; D: director; P: producer; EP: executive producer; C: creator; AN: animated; LA: live-action; Syn: syndicated; HB: Hanna-Barbera; Nel: Nelvana; WD: Disney; WB: Warner Bros.; PP: Paramount; U: Universal; Col: Columbia; Am: Amblin; DH: Dark Horse; L: Largo; QDE: Quincy Davis Entertainment. Attr: all press tabs to be added to this list is cheerfully invited. Send to COMICS SCENE, 475 Park Ave. South, 8th Fl., NY, NY 10016. (Info as of 1/4/94)



Jim Carrey is the face of *The Mask* in the upcoming film.

□ **The Airtight Garage.** AN. EP: Kurosawa Ent. P: Philippe Rivier. D: Moeblus, Katsuhiko Otomo. S: Randy Lofficier. **Alfred E. Neuman.** Film. P: Steven Haft, QDE. **Alias.** Film. U. S: David S. Goyer. P: P. Lenkov, S. Daniel. **Annie.** Film. Rastar. **Archie.** LA Film. DIC. **Barbarella.** LA film. Nel. □ **Baby Huey.** AN. Syn TV. Harvey via Claster TV. For fall. □ **Batman III.** Sequel. D: Joel Schumacher. S: Lee & Janet Batchler. Shoots Sept. □ **Betty Boop.** AN. Film. S: Jerry Rees. EP: R. Fleischer, R. Zanuck. **Black Panther.** Film. W/Wesley Snipes. Sony. **Blade.** Film. **Blankman.** Film. W/ Damon Wayans. D: Mike Binder. Sony. Summer release. **Blondie.** Film. WB. **Broom Hilda.** Film. P: Ernest Chambers. **Cadillacs & Dinosaurs.** AN series. Nel. CBS. □ **Casper.** Film. Am/U. D: Brad Silberling. S: Sherri Stoner, Deanna Oliver. W/ Christina Ricci. Shooting. **Catwoman.** Film. WB. S: Dan Waters. **Charlie Chan.** D: M. Mann. **Concrete.** Film. DH. S: Larry Wilson, Paul Chadwick. □ **The Crow.** Film. Miramax has picked up for release. **Crying Freeman.** Film. D: Christopher Gans. P: Brian Yuzna. **Deadwood.** Film. S: Mark Pavia (D), Jack O'Donnell (P). **Dinosaurs for Hire.** AN. **D. Strange.** Film. S/D: Wes Craven. Savoy Ent. **Doom's IV.** Film. P/S: Rob Liefeld. Am.

□ **Double Dragon.** Film. □ **Duckman.** AN series. USA. Voices: Jason Alexander, Nancy Travis. **Dudley Do-Right.** Film. U. **Elektra Assassin.** Film. **Fat Albert.** LA film. P: Bill Cosby. □ **Faust.** Film. D: Stuart Gordon. S: David Quinn. Storyboards: Tim Vigil. **Flaming Carrot.** Film. **The Flintstones.** Film. U/Am. D: Brian Levant. May '94. **Ghost Rider.** Film. **The Green Hornet.** Film. S: Chuck Pfarrer. U. **Hate.** Film. S: Peter Bagge. Colossal Pictures. **Indebted Hulk.** Film. U. **Inspector Gadget.** LA film. S: J. Loeb III, M. Weisman. U. □ **Judge Dredd.** Film. Sylvester Stallone. S: Bill Wisner. D: Danny Cannon. Shoots in June. **Kull.** Film. U. S: C. Pogue. **The Land Before Time.** AN sequels. Direct to video. □ **LT. Blueberry.** Film. P: Eclectic Films. **The Lion King.** AN film. WD. **Mai the Psychic Girl.** Film. **Mantis.** Fox TV. U. EP: Sam Raimi, Sam Hamm. W/ Carl Lumbly. For mid-season. **The Mask.** Film. New Line. S/D: Chuck Russell. W/ Jim Carrey, Richard Jeni. **The Men in Black.** Film. Col. P: W. Parks, L. McDonald. **Mr. Magoo.** Film. Am/WB. **PageMaster.** AN/LA film. D: Joe Johnston. Fox/HB. X-Mas. **Peanuts.** LA film. P/S: John Hughes. WB. **The Phantom.** Film. PP. AN series. Hearst Ent. Voices: Scott Valentine, Margot Kidder. **Plastic Man.** Film. WB/Am. S: L. Wilson. D: Bryan Spicer.

Pocahontas. AN film. WD. **Prince Valiant.** LA film. S: M. Beckner, Roger Kumble, Marlene King, N. Constantin. **The Pulse.** Film. C: Todd McFarlane. QDE. **Red Sonja.** TV. Lancit. **Reid Fleming.** Film. WB. □ **Richie Rich.** Film. P: J. Silver, J. Davis. D: Don Petrie. W/ Macaulay Culkin. **The Saint.** Film. PP. **Sandman.** Film. □ **Sgt. Rock.** Film. P: Joel Silver. S/D: John Milius. WB. **The Shadow.** Film. S: David Koeppe, P: Martin Bregman. D: Russell Mulcahy. W/Alec Baldwin. Out summer.

Sheena. TV series. P: Paul Aratow. Col. **Sin City.** S: Frank Miller. **Speed Racer.** Film. D: Patrick Read Johnson. S: J.F. Lawton. WB. **The She-Hulk.** TV project. □ **Spawn.** Film. (see item) **Spider-Man.** AN TV mini-series. Fox. Daily TV series later. LA Film. S: Jim Cameron (D). Neil Rutenberg. Summer '95. □ **Spy vs. Spy.** Film. S: Gene Quintano. P: Steven Tisch, QDE. **Stealth Force.** Film. Kandoo. **Superman.** TV series. ABC. **Tales from the Crypt.** HBO. □ **Tank Girl.** Film. D: Rachel Talay. **Terry & the Pirates.** TV. **The Tick.** AN TV mini-series. Fox. Sunbow. **Time Cop.** Film. D: Peter Hyams. S: Mark Verheiden. DH/L. U. W/Jean-Claude Van Damme.

Trouble with Girls. Film. Fox. S: W. Jacobs, G. Jones. □ **V for Vendetta.** Film. S: Hillary Henkin. D: Brett Leonard. P: Joel Silver. □ **Virus.** Film. S: Chuck Pfarrer. P: Gale Anne Hurd. U. **Wolf & Byrd.** TV. Lorimar. P: Joel Simon, Bill Toddman Jr. EP/D: Joe Dante. Fox. **Wonder Woman.** AN TV. □ **X-Men.** LA film. Fox. P: Lauren Shuler-Donner. **Youngblood.** AN series presentation. Roustabout Prod. **Zen.** Film. AN series. □ **Zorro.** Film. S: Kathleen King. D: Mikael Salomon. **TriStar.** Shoots April. AN TV series. Imagination F. Calico.

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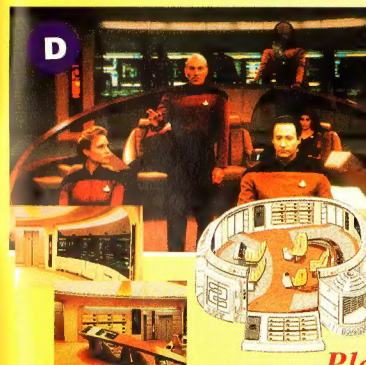
Trail of Spawn

A **Spawn** trailer, a side project involving Industrial Light & Magic personnel and **Spawn** creator Todd McFarlane, is currently in the works. It's slated to go public in March 1994. "We're making a two-minute trailer that Todd will use for promotional purposes," says ILM senior producer Clint Goldman who scripted the **Spawn** trailer with ILM visual FX supervisor Mark Dippe. "It has a beginning, middle and end—not a typical trailer." Goldman, currently working his visual magic on *The Mask*, elaborates that the **Spawn** project is "really more like a commercial. It's based on the **Spawn** comic and will run almost two minutes in real time. The trailer will have some flashback sequences that attempt to give people some sense of who

Spawn is and the complicated structure of his relationships." A bit reluctant to go into details, Goldman does concede that "a lot of research and development must come together on the **Spawn** trailer" and that "computer FX will be used extensively in the depiction of **Spawn**." The producer, who claims he's constantly in contact with McFarlane on this project, insists that the **Spawn** trailer will be used primarily as a promotional device for the comic book but doesn't entirely rule out the possibility of the trailer being employed as teaser to interest studios in a **Spawn** movie. "There may be some connection in making a motion picture," he says. "But using this as a calling card? I don't really know."

—Marc Shapiro

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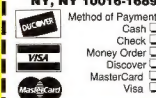
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